

Manhood to Madness: A Play

By

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DECLARATION

This is my original work and has not been presented for a degree or diploma in any other university.

Signature..... Date.....

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This project has been submitted for examination with our approval as university supervisors.

Signature..... Date.....

Prof. Henry Indangasi

Signature..... Date.....

Dr. J. Jefwa

DEDICATION

To all who have suffered stigmatization as a result of barrenness or reproduction related challenges, this work is dedicated.

To Jebitok, the love of my life and baby Motari, you have been great pillars.

To the memory of my late Mum, Isabellah, I applied the hard work you taught me.

To the late Kemunto, I still believe that your pronouncement on my academic success was God's plan for me through you—the journey continues.

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To my siblings Jared, Beatrice and Fridah, God has designed us to excel: identify your lanes and believe in yourselves.

To my classmates, you have been a great team! Our philosophy has always been “We shall overcome.” Get it done! Complete the race.

Manhood to Madness

Preamble

“Obiri, my son, how are you?” she weakly asked.

“I’m fine Auntie,” I responded

“I’m calling to ask you to take your brother back to school. I was operated on but I don’t think I will get out of this bed alive.”

Indeed, true to her prophecy, she did not get out of that bed alive: she had lost the fighting spirit. Only one day lay in between the time she called and when she passed on.

My aunt, Azenath, had undergone a number of operations in search of a baby. Every time she faced the scalpel, she did so with the hope that after the healing of the wound, would come the blessing of a baby or babies. The long and agonizing wait for a baby was an exercise in futility because at the end of the day, we only witnessed her get lowered to the grave before she bore children. But, I have to admit that she was a mother, only that she did not have children.

Within the Kenyan, and indeed African cultural ontology, it is assumed that when people get married, they will bear children because the children form an important element in a family. In cases of barrenness, this dream is usually never realized. Different communities react differently to this problem. However, it is generally viewed that motherhood or fatherhood is the crowning point of womanhood or manhood. Among the Abagusii where I was born and raised, the barren are seen as social misfits. They attract such titles as *omoisia* and *egesagane* for a man and woman respectively. The internal and external pressures that the couples go through often lead to physical violence, infidelity, psychological torture, divorce as well as trauma.

It is ironical that despite knowledge that it takes a man and a woman to procreate, the burden of childlessness is often not shouldered equally by both men and women. Women carry a heavier load as they are seen as the “problem.” In the face of such emotionally draining experiences, violent hands turn on women because it is first conceived that it is a woman who should be barren.

Despite barrenness being an important and universal aspect of human relations, there hardly exist published plays on the same. Most playwrights in Kenya have largely focused on public issues such as corruption and misrule. Being a “sensitive writer,” I have filled the gap with the intention of having my targeted audience read and watch my play on the struggles of the barren in a culturally conditioned environment. My objective is to add my voice to the conversation on barrenness and to expose and satirize the gendered discrimination in the conceptualization of barrenness among the Abagusii. It also my hope that as the audience interacts with *Manhood to Madness*, it will develop a mature sensibility and compassion to the struggles of the barren.

This play will speak for the voiceless who have gone through immensurable agony as they wade in misconstrued judgements and unwarranted social pressure as a result of barrenness.

Manhood to Madness

Synopsis

Richati and Kemunto have been married for eight years but her womb is still silent. She is facing a lot of pressure to bear children to prove her womanhood. She reminisces over the romantic past and how the absence of children in her marriage had changed her situation over time.

When Bochaberi (her mother-in-law) visits, she makes her mission clear by declaring, “*Oyo otarikobereka tari mokungu.*” This means that one is only a woman if her womb is fertile. The demands from Bochaberi make her quarrel with her daughter-in-law and generally strain their relationship. As Richati moves out to buy some beef for her mother’s meals, Bochaberi complains that he is henpecked. However, Kemunto asserts herself to the disbelief of the mother-in-law who gets gripped by fear and runs away. On the way, she meets Kennedy and Jefferson who are intended adoptive children. When they introduce themselves as Richati’s children, she chases them away while asking them to go to their real parents.

Out of a relationship between Nyanguru and Stellah who are house help and houseboy respectively, Stellah conceives and she discloses this to Nyanguru. Soon after the disclosure, she also gets into a love affair with Richati. On learning that Richati is desperate for a child, she decides to feign that he is the one who had impregnated her. This of course is something that Richati gladly receives, promising her a one week holiday in the Seychelles.

When Richati informs Kemunto that he would be going to the Seychelles for one week on work-related business, she registers her interest in accompanying him to the Seychelles but he turns her request down. She quarrels with him accusing him of promiscuity because she had gotten wind of the impending travel from Nyanguru. Later on, Stellah comes asking for permission to visit her parents. Kemunto plays a trick on her and she confirms that indeed they would be travelling and that she is expectant.

The Seychelles journey eventually takes place. Richati and Kemunto swim and snorkel, affirm their love and commitment and run on the beach and splash water on one another. Richati promises not to spare anything in providing for his baby.

Meanwhile, at home Nyanguru has decided to nurse his feelings of rejection by drawing. When he is doing the last parts of the drawing, Kemunto happens to be coming to his room. She exclaims on seeing the perfect piece of drawing to the chagrin of Nyanguru who was just doing this out of his love for drawing. He profusely apologizes but Kemunto assures him that he had done nothing wrong.

As time goes by, Kemunto and Richati's love fades and they quarrel most of the time. Richati eventually moves to the Kitchen where Stelah used to sleep. Finally, Prince Williams Richati is born but the two parents' celebration is cut short as Stelah bleeds excessively due to *amasangi*. Kemunto is thus violently attacked and she is supposed to be burnt for not only being barren but also being a witch. A grass thatched granary roof is lowered on her but before she is set on fire, policemen appear and the people run away.

Richati's family members come for *Ekerero*. This celebration comes with as much ecstasy as mockery as the in-laws openly rebuke Kemunto even calling her a rock. They accuse her of having wasted their brother's eight years.

Out of those lonely and cold nights, a bond of love is established between Nyanguru and Kemunto. Rattled by red ants one early morning, Richati moves to the main family house to change clothes. He finds Nyanguru's pair of shoes under the bed and his pair of long trousers and belt. This makes him believe that Nyanguru must have been spending his nights there. However, Kemunto denies this. Determined to assert his authority in the home, he decides to lay off Nyanguru and send him away from his home. He offers Nyanguru a trunk in which to pack his belonging.

The rude way in which Richati throws the trunk to Nyanguru prompts him to also rudely respond, "Will you also offer me your new Mercedes to transport my children?" He further reveals that Prince Williams was his son and that Kemunto was carrying his pregnancy. It therefore dawns on Richati that Nyanguru had not only occupied the pillow next to Kemunto's but also lifted her veil of "barrenness."

On hearing this, Bochaberi who had paid them a visit requests for calm as they settled the issue. She requests for a family meeting to stabilize Richati's family and conceal his incapacity to sire but the revelation weighs on him so much that his "manhood" fizzles out leaving a madman.

Manhood to Madness

Characters

Richati.....Kemunto’s Husband, a government employee.

Kemunto.....Richati’s Wife who is an economist and a successful
business lady.

Stellah.....Househelp who later becomes Richati’s Second wife

Nyanguru.....House boy, a third year university student
working to raise fees to complete his studies

Bochaberi.....Richati’s mother who is Kemunto’s mother-in-law

Jefferson and Thomas.....Kemunto’s insane sister’s intended adoptive
children.

Okenyuri.....A midwife

Richati’s female relatives

The police

Crowd

ACT I

Scene I

(Kemunto is looking outside from the large window in the living room. On the wall in the living room hang many framed photos but their wedding photos stand out. On one side is a large wall unit in which there is a large TV which is off, though soft music can be heard. There are different types of tables, from wooden to glass. Kemunto moves from the window and fixes her eyes on one of the wooden plaques on which the following words are written '...in happiness and in haplessness, in good health and in ill health...till in death we part.' She lifts her eyes off the plaques and starts to speak)

Kemunto: Things were different then.

Everything seemed to echo the euphoria of the moment.

The arboretum stood still in awe of the sight.

The bamboo, the hibiscus, the lilies— all nature amplified the moment.

We could wait no longer, for love is the deepest craving of humans.

(The action shifts to the arboretum where the unity was founded)

Richati: Kemunto, if I use words, they soon may fade away and nature may not know of the trove of love

I have for you. If I write it on paper, it may fade with time. I will engrave the love on my heart and on this tree. So that it may live, grow and glow as the tree grows. So that those who will come here may read my story and be witnesses so that this promise may never wilt. I'll do it in public so that the stars can shine on it every night...

Kemunto: *(Interrupting)* Richati, let me engrave this date on my heart so that when your madness is

substituted by the real nature of humans, I can remind you of the castles you once built... love is born of circumstances...

Richati: Time never changes people: they become their true selves with the passage of time.

This beautiful serenade will I sing you every day till death.

Kemunto: Student of literature indeed.

Richati: *(Smiling)* Don't forget to add, lover of philosophy.

Kemunto: Do you remember where and how we met?

Richati: Though not students of philosophy, we had met at the borrowing counter in the library
borrowing the same title of a book.

Kemunto: Do you remember the book?

Richati: How can I forget, *The Art of Reason?* By the way what is the relevance of philosophy to
economics?

Kemunto: True education lies in critical and creative thinking.

Richati: True education... *(Returns to the present)*

Kemunto: *(To herself with her head bowed, moving away from Richati.)* That was then. For years I have
moaned and groaned and hoped that the sun would shine upon me to shade this tug of
egesagane but my womb has stubbornly remained silent! Mankind is cruel: he labels and
brands in the worst names and squeezes your human dignity at your breaking point. What do I
have to show for my womanhood? Don't they say that a fertile womb is the cradle of
womanhood?

Richati: *(Entering the living room.)* Dear one *(Kemunto who is looking out through the window does
not respond.)* Kemunto.

Kemunto: The past is a basket that you don't wish to open eyes to, yet it holds
some of the most beautiful memories of life. It is a turbulent tranquilizer.

Richati: Kemunto. *(Draws her attention)* The past is only the foundation of our current problems. The present is only a theatre of realities.

Kemunto: Humans are multi-coloured, you are never sure of the colour you are seeing at any given time. They are always changing. Do you remember the arboretum? How is the past responsible for our current problem?

Richati: Perhaps if we had learnt the art of patience, the situation would have been different. Something perhaps...

Kemunto: Perhaps fate would have designed different paths? Maybe, we would not have united through marriage?

Richati: You overstretch what I say.

Kemunto: *(She laughs sarcastically)* What would have been different?

Richati: So much. Yes, dear one. Everything is always right and wrong: you only need to pick what is convenient at a given time.

Kemunto: Even in engraving marks on trees as symbols?

Richati: Man changes as time changes. Time is the altar of man to change.

Kemunto: You should have known that when you were tearing into nature in the peak of emotions or was it infatuation? I remember the effort, the poetry, the art of seduction.

(Laughing) I swear you should have been given a medal. Can I remind you? *(Smiling)*

Grandiose love fired by a magnum.

(Richati is a bit embarrassed as she recites one of his compositions for her)

Mine eyes entrapped by her presence

The blameless lass- Gift of the Rift

Swinging her hips,

In self reaffirmation of beauty.

And when mine eyes fell on hers,

The heavens and the earth were disintegrating

'Twas the epitome of salient eyes.

And when the glorious grin rested on her face,

My strength was fast fading

Richati: (*Shaking his head in disapproval*) Stop it dear... stop it.... I know I have not faithfully walked my promise but who does it in life anyway?

Kemunto: Is that supposed to be an explanation or justification?

Richati: Our path in life is a labyrinth, we get lost once in a while only to rediscover our paths at sunset, when all is wasted and exhausted. But, how would

I when like termites, humans and nature have descended on me? (*Pauses*) Eight years isn't a short time. They call me *omoisia*, an uncircumcised young boy, and challenge me to deny it.

Kemunto: (*she breaks the silence*) They have conditioned us like guinea pigs: we tremble—at their sight—at our imaginations and convulsions—at nothing, like the guilty.

They have encroached into our lives and everybody has a whistle in his mouth refereeing in this game of a barren woman.

Richati: Eight years.

Kemunto: Eight years! I have become the black sheep!

Richati: These “doctors” have said it all. They have presupposed all manner of illnesses. They say....

Kemunto: I am cursed...

Richati: I have no life bullets : I only fire magazines...

Kemunto: I was a whore picked from the streets of Nairobi....

Richati: I erred in marrying an educated woman...

Kemunto: I aborted several times...my womb was eaten long ago by wolves...

Stellah: *(Enter Stellah carrying a bowl)* Madam.... Sorry... er... er...

Kemunto: Wait for me. I'll come *(Stellah turns unsteadily and almost falls on Nyanguru who was about to knock at the door.)* Sorry...

Nyanguru: Hey... stop. *(Smiling sensually)* Thank you. You see nature knows when to bring you to me. I felt like I was kissing you all over. Were it not for the bosses, I'd have let my palms rest a bit on Mount Everest. Such privileges come once in a blue moon and nature knows that... *(Stella who is sternly looking at him shouts in a controlled way)*

Stellah: Nyanguru... *(Afraid, Nyanguru looks around to confirm he is not in trouble)*

Nyanguru: Sorry.... I... *(He moves as if to kneel but Stellah winks then smiles and walks away as he watches. Richati gets out of the house and finds Nyanguru still staring as Stellah disappears into a building)*

Richati: Watching a movie or a cinema?

Nyanguru: Eeh... nothing really... Stellah gets scared even of herself. She jumped at the bellowing of that bull, *Oundu*, and appealed for my help. Been looking at the direction where the bull moving.

Richati: I'll call you later. *(Richati gets into the house. Nyanguru who is excited to join Kemunto takes off at high speed imitating a moving vehicle)* It's these bulls of yours. Bellowing and counter-bellowing.

Kemunto: Which bulls?

Richati: Nyanguru and *Oundu*. Seems he would do quite well in the animal kingdom—especially in
insemination... we were talking...

Kemunto: (*She seems in deep thought*) Will you please agree that we seek medical attention?

Richati: Well...go ahead.....and.... I mean just do it. I know I'm fit.

Kemunto: Richati, that I don't deny but a wise man acts a fool so as to be vindicated. Why don't we then
just confirm?

Richati: (*He laughs*) Confirm what? The foolish wait upon chance to change what they already know.

Kemunto: (*Getting angry*) Stop these games. What do we do?

Richati: A human being is a creature of action, even when he is doing nothing, he is doing
something— nothing!

Kemunto: (*With seriousness*) Are you still of the opinion that we parent two lonely hearts?

Richati: We should consider formalizing the adoption of Thomas and Jefferson.

Kemunto: Sure. My sister's psychotic problem has taken a toll on her. Medication has hit a snag.

Richati: The world in its mystery dishes children to the undeserving who leave them by the
roadsides or squeeze life out of them and throw them on the nearest rubbish pits or into latrines
but scornfully looks on as the deserving beg for them.

Kemunto: I still hope that it will shine upon us, to hold and nurse our own blood...

Richati: Hope keeps humans clinging on to life, anticipating a better tomorrow but it has a crippling
effect that blocks them from seeing things in a realistic way.

Kemunto: What have they said that you will say anew? They have hurled at me all the verbal weapons they know. They have attempted to choke my life and like medicine release my happiness in small doses but I still live on. Death begins when you allow man to define you rather than you defining yourself.

Richati: But how else can you define yourself to others except by barrenness?

Kemunto: What form of barrenness?

Richati: Are there forms of barrenness?

Kemunto: If barrenness be lack of a child, then there exist innumerable forms— the worst being that of thought. It makes oneself a burden to oneself and others.

Richati: *(sarcastically)* That is a barren mother speaking.

Kemunto: *(speaking as if addressing the audience)*

This burden of silent wombs was lighter when we shouldered it together

When the hope of breaking the silence still lingered in you.

When you still held dear the now meaningless words engraved on boards.

(Richati looks at the boards hung on the walls carrying their marriage vows.)

When you still held as meaningful the rings that solemnized the union.

(Richati looks at his finger that previously had the wedding ring.)

The burden was lighter when we would communicate as equal partners. Yes it was

lighter before I became a flower just for aesthetics in this home...

Richati: *(Interrupting)* Eight years. Eight years and still *omoisia* as they call me.

Kemunto: Does a motor vehicle become a chopper just because an artist wrote that word on it?

Richati: Neither does a donkey change to a zebra by painting itself.

Kemunto: A Man becomes a dangerous animal when he lives in self-delusion and assumes that everybody else except himself is the problem. Are you not the man who has refused to explore the possibilities of science? How can I do it alone when it takes you and me to procreate?

Richati: *(softly but with a sarcastic undertone.)* Gift from the Rift, daughter of Dotia, the philosopher who doubts everything, how many times must I tell you? I'm a descendant of the great Omache whose sperm cell survived in the tubes till sunset when the ovum appeared—whose seed could only sire a girl by accident—whose shot needed not be repeated for even closeness was enough to make one conceive. By the way the day did not matter. It was always the right day. Have you not heard my kin praise me by that name? His genes run through these veins. *(Pinching himself).*

Kemunto: Yes. Whose hybrid seed kindles even on a wasteland? It seems you haven't heard of this cliché that actions speak louder than words. *(Speaks as she leaves)* Son of Omache, pride comes before a fall. Be careful, thunder may strike on your head. We live a life of possibilities. *(She then starts to sing)*

You gave me a husband whose love well was flooding

We shared the beautiful memories, even singing

Contributed, illuminated the love of the world

in every kind in love and in deed.

Now that the well is dry

what option do I have but cry?

Richati: *(Who has been staring at Kemunto)* The peace that once overflowed in this house is a rare visitor

nowadays.

Kemunto: Make ye first peace with others and it will be your portion. The world is a violent place that only spares peace for those who fight for it. *(Begins to walk away.)*

Richati: Come back, Gift of the Rift. Sit down. Let's talk.

Kemunto: Richati, the pedigree bull, what do you want us to discuss? By the way you are aging really fast! *(Opening wide his eyes)* Is it gray hair that I see on your head?

Richati: No dear. You are staring at wisdom. *(They both laugh).*

Kemunto: Let me first serve you dinner lest Bochaberi accuses me of trying to kill her son.

Richati: Bochaberi is not interested in a well built, muscular son who has eaten well. Bochaberi is interested in the cry of a newborn, a grandchild. This would be the sweetest music she has ever listened to. *(Kemunto briefly, expressionlessly stares at him then leaves)*

Richati: They have encroached into my life and stolen all my happiness—they have stolen my identity and sense of pride—they have stolen the self from me and just left a mass of flesh. They send people to me questioning why I am not yet married. They send cats here that meow the whole night. They send owls that hoot the whole night. They say I did not bring home my father's dead spirit. They say my fire went off during initiation. They say my wife is a witch. *(Grabs window grills and shakes them)* Tell me. What else do you want to say? Tell me now or else I will kill you. You, tell me now *(more violent and shouting)* tell me why you've sworn that I should know no peace. *(Seemingly exhausted, he falls into a sofa and sleeps. Soon after, Kemunto and Stellah walk in)*

Kemunto: Richati, *(Kemunto calls)*

Richati: Yes, darling, how are you?

Kemunto: Are you OK? In which library have you been searching for those archaic sweet nothings?

Dinner is ready.

Richati: No. She's OK. But... er... but..er... where is the ring that I gave you? Where is the ring?

Kemunto: *(To Stellah who is a bit nervous)* Just leave.

Richati: The ring... where is the ring? *(Stellah turns the opposite direction and pulls something from her bra which she firmly grips. Kemunto equally turns and their eyes meet as she opens her mouth as if to respond.)*

Kemunto: Take your shadow elsewhere. *(She runs out then she unfolds her palm on which a ring rests)*
Richati, which ring are you asking from me?

Richati: *(Waking up)* Ooh! Dear.

Kemunto: You've been dearing me and asking for a ring. Which ring?

Richati: Forget it. I must have been dreaming.

Kemunto: OK. Wash your hands for dinner.

Richati: We have eaten this food for eternity yet we remain confoundingly slim. Perhaps we need to try hunger.

Kemunto: Some jokes lack taste, Richati. *(As he washes his hands, a rhythmic knock on the floor is heard.)* Ka...ka...ka.....ka.....ka....ka... *(The sound is higher and nearer every time it is heard)*

Richati: Nyanguru never outgrows childhood. He might be killing flies or just hitting the ground as he comes. *(He stands to check on what is happening but a knock is heard on the door)* Ignore him. He overstretches his jokes. Just yesterday he ran to me saying he was being attacked by a lion

only for me to go there and find the lion in a book: it was just a drawing! Let's eat. When he is tired he will come in. *(He increases the volume of the music that is playing.)*

Bochaberi: *(She draws open the curtains and cranes her neck into the living room. The duo is dumbfounded. Speaking at the same time)*

Richati & Kemunto: Mum *(Bochaberi just looks at them scornfully)*

Bochaberi: *(Walks in.)* Don't just eat my generous children, crash the bones and suck the bone marrow as your mother feeds on the aroma. Don't waste your time to open the door, the uninvited guests can bask on rain or go back to where they came from. Open the door only when the bones are clean...

Richati: *(Interrupting)* But Mum...

Bochaberi: I was your mum 35 years ago. When I carried you here. *(Points to her womb.)* Yes, that was the time when your life depended on me.

Kemunto: Mum please...

Bochaberi: *(Interrupting.)* Let this be the last time that you should call me by that name. We have had enough of you. You...

Kemunto: *(Interrupting)* Sorry Mu... sorry..... *(She goes to the bedroom amidst tears)*

Bochaberi: The *amaebi* that you've been eating has made you docile like cow dung. Yeah, she has made love portions your main meal. Your wife is abusing me as you cheer...

Richati: *(Raising his voice)* But how has she abused you Mum?

Bochaberi: Your wife is your mum. Your conscience is hidden in her undergarments, you cannot think beyond her sleek figure.

Richati: (*Getting furious*) Mum, I'm now a grown man and I make decision here. You must respect me and my wife.

I'm now a man. The first born in our family...

Bochaberi: (*Interrupting.*) How does a tree manifest its maturity except by seeds that grow? You are not normal and I won't place an iota of blame on you. You can be used as a case study of the drunkards of *amaebi*.

Richati: (*Shouting*) Mum!

Bochaberi: Your mum must be snoring now. She is listening to you as you rave and rant. Go ahead and please her as you have done all these years. Didn't she instruct you not to open the door to this uninvited visitor you are now calling Mum?

Richati: Mum you are wrong.

Bochaberi: You are right. Your "mum" must always be wrong where your real "mother" is involved.

That is why you are caged here like a helpless chicken. You never make any decision like a man. You are only a man as you claim by name.

Richati: (*Addressing her softly.*) OK. Please Mum sit down. Sit please. (*She sits down*) You look like you came to the city in a hurry. Your rubber shoes Mum, and even the clothes. You...

Bochaberi: (*Interrupts*) Unlike you, Son, I know the burden of motherhood. A hen does not continue feeding when an eagle strikes. I lost ten children to the insatiable hunger of earth before you were born. I lost two more after you were born. I almost lost myself before old age crept on me and laid a trap in my search for children. Your star has shone brilliantly until now when you refuse to recognize me as your mother. When my son's life is in danger, I suspended everything just to save him. You made me a mother.

Richati: (*Surprised*) But I don't remember sending any distress call?

Bochaberi: I communicate with you through the umbilical cord, Son. I know when you need me before you call for me. Your late father must be a troubled father. My stomach has troubled me so much for the last three days. So, I decided to visit Nyanabi for divination. Yeah he threw *chinche* and that is what brought me here.

Richati: (*In disbelief*) Mum, you went to a witchdoctor? Whatever for?

Bochaberi: A womb is not a child's play toy, Son. A womb is the house where a child grows.

Richati: What about it?

Bochaberi: She doesn't have it—your mum.

Richati: Aren't you my mum? Am I not your child? Who doesn't have it?

Bochaberi: This girl you are rearing here, on her third abortion, got her womb removed. It won't even take her a miracle to conceive. That is the business she was doing in college. Ask her kin. Ask her stepmother. She narrated it till she went down in tears.

Richati: (*Who appears shocked.*) That's not true Mum.

Bochaberi: (*scornfully*) You have consumed *amaebi* like a zero-grazed cow. When I speak to you, the *amaebi* responds. Call her here, I want her to deny this. I have cried to you to marry for six years now. But you seem to prefer *oboisia*; her *Egete* is so strong that you can only reason around her in.....

Richati: Stop it Mum. I don't want these baseless advances and fabrications aimed at belittling me. You have never respected me like a grown-up, like a man.

Bochaberi: You only will cease to be *omoisia* when she will cease to be *egesagane*. For now you move

together: body and shadow. Only when you are sober will you be respected. As for her, she is permanently condemned by her wicked past. *(Their eyes in contact)*

Son, it is not without reason that they use soapstone for curving at Tabaka. A potter who uses loam in modelling does not complain of wasted energy.

Richati: Mother, I have listened to you pour heavy words.

Beyond this body I am no more

I am eaten up and about to collapse

If I knew where to run to

I would have done it

Only to save face

Only to rekindle the lost hope

Only to mend the lost relationships

Only to see like in a mirror

The problem with her womb.

You who has faced the harshness of nature,

Aren't you better placed to understand?

Would you now kill the only survivor that you have?

Would you please allow us to discuss these issues together so.

Bochaberi: *(Calmly)* Son, what have we not discussed? That you should marry another wife? Or that your wife has bewitched you? What can we reasonably discuss when you are still drugged?

Richati: The tongue! Who can explain the mystery of the tongue?

It soothes and heals raptured souls yet it also produces words that bring down kingdoms. Many words spoken on the same thing yet many others not spoken. There exists little or no truth at all. Humans, why are you such cruel animals? We cry every day, yet those who make us cry ingeniously invent more painful ways that sink us further into misery. *(Shedding tears)* Why can't we just experience a little peace?

Bochaberi: *(Raising her head)* That is the cry of a pained soul. Son, let's talk. *(Appears Stellah who curtseys and greets Bochaberi with two hands. The atmosphere is tense)*

Stellah: Welcome Mum. What can I serve you with?

Bochaberi: I'm OK. Thank you Daughter. Sometimes the soul needs its food to normalize the body to hunger for its. What I now need isn't something you can offer. You have a clean heart. *(Stellah smiles as she leaves. Bochaberi turns to Richati.)* Second wife son?

Richati: House help.

Bochaberi: Then let her help your wife. You get what I mean?

Richati: I know my taste. You won't choose wives for me.

Bochaberi: I know. High propensity for the expired ones—that bring pain to families.

(Kemunto emerges from the door she had entered. No longer crying. She has a firm look on the face. She lets herself sink into the sofa)

Richati: *(To Kemunto).* Let me get some beef. I'll be back. Keep my mother company.

Bochaberi: *(Frowning)* Are you going to look for vegetables while your wife has spread her legs on the sofa? Son! This *kababa* must be one from Kitui.

After that, bath and dress her, then serve her mushroom soup in bed so that she can eat and forget she is the woman to bear children. (*Kemunto and Richati exchange glances, then he leaves.*)

Kemunto: Mum...

Bochaberi: You not only fail to respond to child bearing, but also fail to listen, and understand. I told you not to call me Mum.

Kemunto: (*speaking authoritatively*). OK. Woman.....

Bochaberi: (*Interrupting*) You called me woman? You....

Kemunto: (*shouting.*) Listen you woman. Everything has limits. My patience and your arrogance are no exception. I no longer care who you are. A mother is only a mother as long as her heart is humane. Otherwise she is a beast who bestializes other people on the basis of natural calamities. You know what I am going to do? (*She stands*) I want to get a good cane and thoroughly beat you up so I may squeeze all your hatred out. Insult me once more. Talk ill of me. Speak!

Bochaberi: (*Bochaberi appears afraid*) It's your step-mum who said so. I didn't know it.

Kemunto: (*Moving closer to her*) Said what? (*Shouting*) Speak!

Bochaberi: (*Leaning backwards*) That you lost the baby's house during your third abortion.

Kemunto: You did not tell my husband that, did you?

Bochaberi: I ...am... am... sorry. I'm sorry. Bees are innocent agents of cross pollination.

Kemunto: Bell of hell, hell-bent to wreck me to death.

Bochaberi: Your stepmother!

Kemunto: My stepmother? *(She goes back into the bedroom hurriedly as if to pick something. Scared, Bochaberi moves out hurriedly in an attempt to save herself from the imminent danger. She screams)*

Bochaberi: Uuu! Uuuuu! Uuuuu! Help! Save my life from this demon. Uuuuuu! *(She falls as she tries to negotiate a corner and bruises her elbow. She has drawn the attention of Stellan and Nyanguru.)*

Nyanguru: *(To Stellan)* Who is she?

Stellan: A woman. *(They both have the urge to laugh but don't. She then whispers to Nyanguru)* The Boss' mother. Are you not aware?

Nyanguru: How could I have known? I have never seen her. *(To the granny)* Who is chasing you Grandma? You seem to be running away from yourself.

Stellan: Nyanguru! A dog does not bark at its owners. It wags its tail.

Nyanguru: But I don't see anybody. *(Approaching Bochaberi.)* Grandma who is after you?

Bochaberi: That demon who has bewitched my son. That demon who has refused to make me a grandmother that I have to be called such by ill-mannered bastards like you. Are you mocking me? Don't you know that Richati is my only son and that he has not given me *omoisia* who can proudly call me *magokoro*?

Nyanguru: Sorry Mum

Stellan: Sorry. Let me wipe it.

Bochaberi: *(She stands briefly and then continues moving to the gate)* This accursed woman has spoilt my son. She is baying for my blood. I was lucky to have survived. I was supposed to die.

(Looking back, to the duo) When Richati comes, tell him I have gone to nurse the wounds inflicted by his beast. *(She leaves)*

Stellah: *(She gets angry)* She's a beast, how does she hope to stay without children, without manners? How can she chase such an old granny?

Nyanguru: Sometimes we should allow the glow of our silence announce our wisdom. When words outrun reason, chaos manifests itself.

Stellah: Old bones are custodians of truth. What's your proposition?

Nyanguru: None.

Stellah: Then what is your point?

Nyanguru: I have no point. I have neither believed nor doubted what she said. If I had seen her shadow turning or perhaps heard her whisper, my position would be different. On the issue of age, lying is not limited to the babies. What do they know to lie about?

Stellah: Little knowledge. Acting a philosopher, eeh?

Nyanguru: Far from that. I actually know nothing as you've always rightly pointed out. But how do those who know something look, professor? Wasp-shaped bodies making even the stiff naked turn on their sight? *(Attempting to touch her)*

Stellah: Stop it Nyanguru! Only madmen carry jerricans to the river to fetch water when dark clouds have gathered. It surely shall rain.

Nyanguru: It shall rain.

Stellah: It's evening and the day is far spent.

Nyanguru: I'm especially inspired by the beauty of the magnificent sunset. The stars will soon shine.

Stellah: How can stars shine on such a gloomy evening?

Nyanguru: Stars are always shining even when you do not see the light: our inability to see it does not mean its absence.

Stellah: Continue eating words until Richati comes back. Then tell him you've made no effort to know where the children are because you've been chasing a beauty queen's shadow. *(Nyanguru exclaims then leaves at a high speed towards the gate. Almost immediately, Richati appears carrying his youngest son's bag and pullover. He calls out)*

Richati: Jefferson! Jefferson! These boys get so excited when they come home that they leave the bags at the gate. *(Calls as he paces into the sitting room)* Kemunto! *(Looks back and sees somebody in the flower garden.)*

All that was meant to be beautiful will be beautiful: they will glow to radiate their magnificence even in darkness. It's amazing to see to hearts that were tearing one another less than thirty minutes ago explore the beauty of God's creation together. How beautiful the world would be if all that man would do is to show their better sides. What a sight to behold! *(Moves as if to see clearly)* Yeah! She's picking her a flower. Yes... yes...

Kemunto: *(Standing at the door holding the frames with both hands)* Richati!

Richati: *(surprised, he quickly turns to the door)* Aah! Kemunto, who is in the garden? Where is Mum?

Kemunto: That is Stellah. Mum might be there too.

Richati: And the children?

Kemunto: They might be there too. They haven't come here. I've been indoors since you left.

Richati: *(Handing over what he is carrying.)* Let me join them. *(She goes inside. He walks slightly then*

Calls out.) Stelloh, whom are you in there with?

Stelloh: Me and me alone (*Lowering her voice*) darling.

Richati: Where is Mum? (*She keeps quiet*) Stelloh! You didn't hear my question? (*She maintains her quiet but hurries to him.*)

Stelloh: (*Standing before her looking with expectant eyes.*) She could be somewhere in this city: thoroughly beaten and chased like a bloodhound. You see over there? (*Richati stretches his eyes and places them on a blood stained cotton where first aid had been done.*)

Richati: What is it? Can you explain? (*Calls*) Kemunto!

Kemunto: (*Mimicking him*) Kemunto! Kemunto! Kemunto! I'm too much on your lips. You have to call me even when flies are mating?

Richati: That blood over there! Where is my mum?

Kemunto: Should I always know where the boys are or where your mother is?

Richati: Where are the boys?

Kemunto: They could be somewhere. I can see one bag and pullover over there.

Richati: (*Pointing at the bag and mimicking her*) Over there.

These barren mothers

Crying for children

When they cannot

Take care of a baby for a single day

They shade their skins every day

To reveal their inner beauty

But what's inner beauty devoid of procreative ability?

Kemunto: (*Getting angry*) What a blessed lot you are!

Those who diagnose illness by impulses.

Rocking a boat with one life saver

Hoping that you will dive in it first.

Humans! Why are we quick to apportion blame even when nothing has been done to confirm what it is that we believe in — to diagnose illness through scientific research?

(*Getting calm but firm and emphatic*) You are a man only in long trousers.

Richati: (*Shouting and trying to hit her*) Egesaganeke, you now have the courage to abuse me even after

rearing you for free for eight years? I sure wasn't a man! I should have been a father by now.

Kemunto: It takes more than sowing to be a man. (*The lights fade with Richati following his wife with a clenched fist.*)

ACT I

Scene II

This scene is outside the main family house. Richati is still arguing with the wife. Stellah is staring at them. Nyanguru walks in accompanied by Thomas and Jefferson. The children are holding tightly onto Nyanguru as if being chased by something. As they spot Kemunto and Richati, they run and cling onto Richati.

Jefferson: Daddy she chased us. She told us she would be waiting. Tell her not to beat us again.

Richati: Son, who was beating you? *(He points in the direction of the wife)*

Richati: *(Mistaking that to mean Kemunto was beating them)* You see! What kind...

Kemunto: *(Interrupting)* ... of a mother am I

Richati: Kemunto!

Kemunto: Richati!

Kemunto: *(Kemunto turns in her direction, and stares at her without blinking.)* Stellah, make yourself busy. Do what brought you here.

Stellah: *(She stands still and then sneers and looks in the opposite direction, places her left hand down her back and starts snapping drawing her attention to the ring.)* Hehe...

(Kemunto takes notice of the ring on her finger)

Kemunto: You must not lose yourself to the ring, dear one. Those who don't wear them are more likely to be faithful. The best ring lives within your mind. It guides your conscience, it moderates you when the world throws you all its madness, it leaves you afloat when all sink into immorality, it is your partner in sanctifying your solemn promises, it...

Richati: I swear you are wrong...

Kemunto: I'm wrong on what?

Richati: I did not give her the r...

Kemunto: Richati, she won't be a referee in our differences, *(Turning to Stelah, she points at the direction she wants her to move. Stelah stands still as Richati gestures her to move.)*

Straighten the crooked backs of the downtrodden so they may flex their muscles on you.

Where does she get the courage to do this?

Stelah: *(Aside)* He's ours. *(She looks at the ring.)* Hahaha..... You sure don't mean to call yourself a Woman. You and Richati are brothe...

Richati: Hey! Stop it! Stop it Stelah!

Kemunto: *(Shocked)* Yeah, I heard it right. Wasn't the unproductive fig cut and cast away? Shrubs are cut to provide pegs for tethering animals. However, it's the owners who cut them. *(She starts crying and the two children hold her hands as Richati walks off.)*

Jefferson & Thomas: *(Speaking at the same time)* Mummy! Mummy!

Bochaberi: *(Comes from behind the main family house and shouts at the children)* Hey you again!

(The children shout and cry for help as they scamper for their safety)

Thomas: Daddy! Daddy! *(Running into the house)* She has come again. Here here dadiiiiiiiiiiii.... *(Crying).*

Richati: *(His voice is heard shouting)* Kemunto. If your womb wasn't silent, you would have known the burden of womanhood.

Bochaberi: *(Pointing at Kemunto who is crying)* She has even bewitched the bastards. They run like demons. She cannot find shelter in these things collected from the streets. They do not have a drop of our blood in them. Borrowed clothes hardly cover one's nudity.

A fertile womb is the cradle of womanhood.

Do cribs become mothers just because children grow in them?

Kemunto: Yours was a mission of misery, of squeezing dry any little drop of my happiness. You've hang on my life like a rain cloud. What is the shape and colour of the children you want? Are they products of a barren womb? If mine be the silent one, why must you persecute them even before they know how to live?

Bochaberi: *(Resigned)* Ours isn't a lineage of bastards.

Kemunto: We are tied to fresh stumps. We can only shake.

Yet we don't make any progress

We must necessarily live in the dark

Even when brightness smiles at us.

We must burn in the sun

Even when cool shades abound.

(The action shifts to the children's earlier encounter with their grandmother)

Thomas: *(Running to embrace her grandmother)* Jeff, *magokoro* *(pointing at her)* you remember the photo in the sitting room?

Jeff: *Magokoro*, you brought me a banana?

Bochaberi: Yes grandson. *(To herself)* What a welcoming duo? This is what she has denied me. *(To the children)* Whose children are you?

Thomas: *Magokoro* you are bad. You don't know me. I am Thomas Richati.

Jeff: *Magokoro*, I won't greet you. Daddy said you will bring me a banana from Kisii. Give me a banana.

I won't tell you my name.

Bochaberi: (*Appears surprised*) Thomas Richati?

Thomas: Aha! *Magokoro* knows my name.... you see...

Bochaberi: (*Appears to reflect on something*) You! (*Hitting the kids with her walking stick*) You

bastards who have the accursed blood in your veins. I will devour you today (*she gets hold of Thomas' hand and bites her as Jeff cries.*) You must go back to your real mother and father. (*Hits Jeff who now appears so frightened.*) Go back! Go back! Never come here again. Go.... go.....

She must even have pregnancy carried for her

She lifts children off the shelves, like packets of sugar.

(*She pushes them outside the gate as the scene ends*)

ACT II

Scene I

(The scene takes place in the main family house. It is the same as that in Act One Scene One)

Richati: Dear one, I will be flying out to the Seychelles for one week.

Kemunto: *(After a moment of silence)* The Seychelles. When are you going there?

Richati: Not quite sure but it will be in one week's time

Kemunto: Are you going for a holiday?

Richati: Yes. *(Frowning in a way that suggests he had uttered what was not intended. He turns his head and acts busy following a programme on T.V.)*

Kemunto: Is the air in our country not good enough for you to breathe?

Richati: Eeh... eeh...

Kemunto: No problem. I'll be aboard your plane in the search of a breath of fresh air too.

Richati: *(He appears to have been rattled.)* Oh, no! I will be busy attending meetings. We may not have time together.

Kemunto: Attending meetings has no problem. The problem lies in the people you hold meetings with and the purpose for such meetings.

Richati: I know you don't doubt that I will be going for a job related business. We have been to the Seychelles before. I'd have loved to holiday there but I will be having a lot to do.

Kemunto: Yes, we've been to the Seychelles before
but that was long ago when the essence of our union still shone.
I sponsored the tour

I will sponsor myself there again. I'll give you time to attend your meetings. (*Looking at him*)

The Seychelles is especially good for tourists at twilight: when you will have been free from your "important business."

Richati: No dear, we can plan for a holiday tour of the place next month.

Kemunto: I see your determination. Hope you'll sell your shell and come back a rejuvenated person.

Richati: (*He laughs*) Thank you for being such an understanding person.

Kemunto: Forcing a river to flow uphill can only make you grow weary or even die. A man convinced against his opinion is still of the same opinion, so they say. (*Scornfully*) Go to Seychelles and work extremely hard: work in the morning, work at noon and in the afternoon, work in the evening and at night, work at dawn before you again begin working in the morning. If that will maintain the happiness I'm seeing on your face, I'll be fine.

Richati: (*Smiling*) After that agreement, we need some coffee.

Kemunto: (*She sneers*) Agreement in what Richati? I have not agreed with you on anything. Since you left your matrimonial bed for the kitchen, I know you can plan and do anything. Go and try your luck. Aim and shoot on the ocean shore. Perhaps that's what we need to change our statuses from *omoisia* and *egesagane* to parents. We...

Richati: (*Getting furious*) You may have to go back to your mother so that she teaches you how to respect your husband. Why do you always want to associate me with immorality?

Kemunto: (*Sarcastically*) Sorry Mr. Faithful Husband. I thought that a man who leaves his matrimonial bed for a "maidial" bed of the house help is inextricably bound and intertwined with immorality. I now know. How are you Mr. Moral Puritan?

Richati: I actually wouldn't have minded if you went hunting for a baby if I had a problem. I have given you comfort and title. That is enough.

Kemunto: Talk of a meaningless title. I have contributed as much comfort as you've done here. If I were a house wife I'm sure I would not be alive today. By the way Richati, why are you so convinced that I have a problem? Suppose you realize it is you who has a problem how will you reverse the psychological torture you have inflicted in me? How will you be able to raise your head above the sand?

Richati: *(Stretches himself on the sofa and laughs)* I could be the newest father in town. At the right time, I will be crowned.

Kemunto: You sound very different. You sound very happy.

Richati: A quality grain in dry soil starts germinating as soon as moisture is available. Why should I not be happy to be alive?

Kemunto: Have you just started living?

Richati: Yes, I have been surviving.

(Enter Stellah and Nyanguru. Whereas Stellah appears extremely happy Nyanguru is sad. Stellah spreads herself on a couch to the surprise of Nyanguru who stands at the entrance with his mouth agape. Both Richati and Kemunto look at Stellah then their eyes meet.)

Richati: Nyanguru, have a seat. *(He sits on a stool next to where he has been standing.)*

Kemunto: *(She blurts out facing Stellah.)* Stellah!

Stellah: *(Stellah stretches herself on the couch as if she is waking up from sleep. She caresses her belly then stretches her arm to conspicuously show the ring on her finger. Kemunto gets as much*

shocked as she is angered on realizing that what she has all along ignored is the ring she pushed down her husband's finger on their wedding day)

I'm tired. I think I need an off to see my parents and relax a bit.

Kemunto: *(She stands and grabs Stellah's hand pulling off the ring. She then faces Richati)*

There are certain things that are meant for specific people. Even when circumstances change, they still are not transferable: they can only be discarded. Like a horse, you've led me with blinkers for long. However, this may be the last one. I have learnt that too much submission breeds misunderstanding, which nurtures indifference which can lead to death. I'm now ready for war. You know that in war, there are no absolute winners: there are casualties on both ends.

Richati: *(Softly)* Kemunto, calm down. Calm down, please. *(Attempting to touch her.)* Stop it. One does not continue drinking clean water from a well whose water he has troubled. A child who continually bites her mother's teats loses the privilege of suckling.

Kemunto: *(She shouts at him.)* You just pulled a ring I pushed down your finger and pushed it down this *(Pointing at Stellah)* mannerless girl?

Richati: Stop it! Stop it! *(He tries to hold her hand but she pushes him away.)*

Kemunto: Richard, for far too long you've taken advantage of me because of my silence. I will no longer be silent. I will speak. I will act. *(Moving closer to Richati. He starts moving backwards as Stellah slips through the door. Nyanguru stands rooted to where he was initially shedding tears yet with a smile on the face, opening his mouth once in a while as if reciting every word that comes out of Kemunto's mouth)* The moment I will speak and act, my burdens will be lighter, my adversaries will run scared, my oppressors will shake in fear, my value will start increasing, my star will shine brighter, you'll know that there is more in me than the mass of flesh you've always taken me for. *(She stops before Richati who is leaning backwards as if to*

avoid a slap from her. She goes back to where she was seated initially as he also sits.

Nyanguru follows suit. The three heads sit each in thought on the circumstances surrounding the conflict before them.)

Nyanguru: *(This is what he thought about but could not speak)* Mum, for too long you've looked like a trapped rat trying in vain to free itself. I was mistaken. Within that deceptive weakness, lies immense power. I have admired every word. You've spoken with power. When you speak, you let people know who you really are. It seemed like every word that came out of your mouth brought out the power within. You look younger. You look beautiful. *(Looks at Kemunto with admiration but when he realizes Richati is looking at him, he recoils and waits for thunder to strike.)*

Richati: *(This is what went through his mind)* This is obviously going to be a tough situation for me to navigate. I have sought trouble with a woman bargaining with nature for a favour. How could I be so foolish? *(He lifts his right palm to his left cheek and appears deep in thought.)* How will I put out the fire that I've lit in my life? *(He clicks.)* This Stellan is a weird species. Must she flaunt and flirt with the ring I gave her? Must she show off her pregnancy? After all it is hardly two weeks. *(Shakes his head)* Very mean in reason. When we lower ourselves to the level of mediocrity, embarrassment becomes our partner.

Kemunto: *(This is what went through her mind.)* Nobody will live my life for me, however, loving they may be. I will have to fight my wars.

I will have to stop feeling sorry for myself.

Generals never win a war by withdrawing from the war front to sympathize with themselves.

They fight with the full knowledge that they may die as well. *(Clenches her fist and gnashes*

her teeth) I'm at the peak of problems; the situation can only get better. *(She suddenly breaks into a song)*

Freedom is coming tomorrow

And if I don't live to see the day

You better believe it

I'll be there

This is my home and I'm here to stay

(Dancing happily and more vigorously)

Freedom is coming tomorrow

Get ready mama prepare for your freedom

(Richati exits as Kemunto continues to sing. In an impulse of emotion, Nyanguru joins in dancing vigorously before he suddenly stops and starts speaking with his eyes closed.)

Nyanguru: What a lovely madam you are. Both in heart and in appearance.

What an ingrate he is, both in heart and act

A holiday at Mauritius—yes, that boiling city of romance.

(He speaks gently with a smile on the face)

Yes, that warm city that bakes people in ovens of romance rekindling lost love, sealing

budding honey-baes, healing scars of love gone sour.

Mauritius—the city of love and laughter

Yet who will be taken to the city?

My equator! *(He pauses then continues in a slow tempo but emphatic tone.)*

If he chooses gullibility from a table with reason, let him drink

Hope he doesn't choke in his folly.

(Smiling) I still see a fountain, though far away, where we all will sit and evaluate our lives.

When the tides are over, the sea will be calm. Madam, all will be well. You'll have the last
laugh...

Kemunto: *(Kemunto who all along has been watching him calls)* Nyanguru. *(He turns to face*

Kemunto, his mouth agape, his arms on his head. He seems so scared that he cannot speak.

He sinks onto his knees and attempts to speak but no word is forthcoming—just his lips can be seen moving. Aside) What a lovely madam you are. Both in heart and in appearance. *(She lowers the hands from the head and assists him stand. They briefly look at one another before she orders him to leave.)* You may leave.

The scene shifts to an earlier encounter between Stellah and Richati witnessed by Nyanguru.

Stellah: What shall I do? *(She recites a verse she had memorized during her childhood)*

...accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms shall be proclaimed upon rooftops. *(She shakes her head, shows a haggard face.)*

Every child and adult, Christian and pagan will be witness to my changing body:

a silent confession of my sin of fornication. What.... *(Richard appears)* Ooh! Richati... eeh...

Richati: Let me also touch it. Soon my child will grow in this womb.

Stellah: You sure want me to carry you a baby? Won't I be skinned by Madam?

Richati: Madam is not exactly a nuclear atom. As a matter of fact, my most immediate desire

now is to prove my manhood by siring... a boy

Stellah: What if I told you that I am carrying your girl. Will the sky collapse upon my head?

Richati: This is not an issue to joke around with. A woman does not carry pregnancy to full term without

change of her title: she becomes a mother. In the shadow of the mother lies a father. Where the title “father” lies, is a place of honour.

Stellah: *(Sensing the urgency with which Richati needs a child, she decides to “break the news”)*

Richati, I wanted to wait until you would see it by yourself. But your heart knows not the value of patience. Because you hunger for an heir, I’ll hopefully give you an heir. But you must be willing to accept what God gives us — the gender notwithstanding. *(Smiling)* By intention and process, you are a father, by reality you are yet to be!

Richati: *(He looks tense.)* Speak in a plain language so that I may confirm what I seem to decipher.

Stellah: *(Takes Richati’s right hand and places it on her belly).* In here lies your child or children. *(She laughs as Richati looks dumfounded)* I hope I’m plain enough now.

Richati: *(Getting excited)* No! You must be joking. Can you be serious for a moment! What do you mean to say?

Stellah: I mean exactly what I have said: I’m expectant. Soon you’ll be a father. You only now

need to protect me from your wife as I take care of your baby or babies for you. *(They have moved closer and are embracing each other.)*

Richati: Thank you Stellah. You are the sweetest thing I have ever known. You cease to be a house help.

I have married you. You don't make *omoisia* a man and continue to be a house help. A week in the Seychelles may be enough for us to share our bundle of joy, to walk the streets, to swim in the ocean, to celebrate the change of status. *(He looks at her and hugs her again.)*

Stellah: Richati, do not promise me the moon when you cannot offer a firefly. If you want to light my life as a result of this gift, promise me small things. You ... *(Richati interrupts)*

Richati: I have not promised you anything yet. I am not exactly a beggar. One week in the Seychelles is nothing to me. Relax, don't pick a grain when I have a grain depot to offer.

Stellah: Seychelles? Small things change life in a big way. What else will you give me? Can I tell you?

Richati: *(Still entangled with their eyes in contact)* Please don't. Wait until I uplift you to my pedestal.

From there, you can choose things that matter in life. You never know how beautiful Netherlands is until you ascend to Mount Scenery. You have fulfilled your part. Give me time to fulfill mine.

Stellah: Ah... stop it ... you make me blush....

Richati: You soon will learn to handle yourself by your new status. *(Lets her free)* Let us free ourselves lest these birds send the message. *(They hug once more and exit as Nyanguru walks on with a heap of rubbish in his hand. He speaks facing the audience.)*

Nyanguru: She will go to the Seychelles on my account I swear

Our mattresses were bought at the same time

Together with the two pillows

Night after night our heads have lain on her pillow

We have exchanged our breaths all these nights.

She has all along shared about his sensual looks.

She had told me I was a father to be

Yet we now are two fathers pointing at one embryo!

I learnt of the same while lying on that pillow I had lain all this time

My mattress is new: only dust lies on the bedding.

How come he claims responsibility yet he overthrew me only yesterday?

(The action returns to the present. Kemunto is still seated on the sofa she was earlier.)

Kemunto: If he has found love in the house help,

If she has made him a father,

Then I need to seek solutions to my problems alone.

How can others understand my pain yet they are celebrating their success?

(Looking at the boards where their marriage vows are engraved)

Don't the eucalyptus continue to grow as the tendrils form a canopy over the mangrove and suffocate their growth?

These vows have I faithfully kept, yet my marriage has largely been that of tears,

If marriage is a union between two, then vows kept by one cannot keep it.

We shall walk our different paths

In pursuit of individual happiness.

(She repeats the statement made earlier by Nyanguru with a broad smile on the face)

What a lovely Madam you are, both in heart and in appearance!

Even hyenas have in-laws.

What must he have been thinking about? What exactly does he like in me?

Was this just a statement or does it have more to it? *(She lies on the sofa facing the ceiling as Richati walks in.)*

Richati: *(He calls his wife's name as he sits)* Kemunto!

Kemunto: Yes my dear husband, have you come back from the Seychelles?

Richati: *(Calmly)* We need to talk, my wife.

Kemunto: That's not the usual you. Are you guilty or are you planning something sinister?

Richati: I'm neither guilty nor planning anything sinister. Sodden by life's rain, it

is sensible that I should seek shelter even if it is temporary: it may save my life, even if it is for a second.

Kemunto: As a married man with a family, do you seek shelter alone as your family succumbs to the storms?

Richati: At no point have I done that.

Kemunto: Well tell me what it is that you want to say. No need to waste your time. You can save it for the trip.

Richati: I've just received a call that I'm supposed to go for the trip tomorrow.

Kemunto: Why don't you go now? Real men neither hide their intentions nor their actions.

Go to Mauritius or whatever destination it is and celebrate your new found love. When you come back, install her in the master bedroom. After all what do you have to do with a

wasteland? Have you not wasted enough time already? *(She starts to cry)* Go.... go now.....please go.... *(Enter Stellah who just shouts from the door)*

Stellah: Eeh... I've to pay my parents a visit. I will come back after one week.

Kemunto: *(Kemunto wipes her tears and sits on the sofa.)* You won't be going to the Seychelles? I thought you had planned to fly there?

Stellah: *(Laughs amusingly)* Sorry... aah... I didn't know he had already informed you. Yes I'm going with him. *(Richati's head is bowed)* Did he also tell you that I am carrying his baby?

Kemunto: Yes he did, congratulations! Come closer, I wish to send you. *(She moves closer as she stands.*

Kemunto gives her a heavy slap that lands her on the floor. Richati stands in between the two to ensure there is no more assault. Stellah rashes out.)

Just a little pain as a life lesson.

Living is learning: learning is a lifelong process.

You need to learn about self-respect and respect for others or else the world will teach you in a painful way dear.

(Facing Richati) You have taught her to demean me but she has demeaned you the most. A man who cannot even tame a house help adapted as wife is not worth his salt!

I'd welcome the possibility of you two wallowing in happiness without using my pain as the bullseye in your games.

(Shouting is heard from outside. Peeps into the sitting room where Richati is struggling to contain her.)

Stellah: *Egesaganeke*, you think I am the one who is standing in the way of your children? Was I there

when you were doing business in college? Tell me... Tell me... Deny it. Didn't you lose your womb in your third abortion? Do you want me to loan you mine?

Richati: (*Richati shouts at her increasing his volume every time he calls*) Stellan! Stellan! Stellan!

(*She retreats still hurling insults.*)

Kemunto: Richati, from whose mouth is she pulling this tasteless yet most fashionable narrative among your kin?

Richati: Water from a stream travels a long way: it may end up in an ocean or sea.

Kemunto: So who is the stream in this? Are you the channels for this movement? Why are people keen on forcing me to accept a dark side of a life I have never lived?

Richati: You always want to pull me into your problems, dear

Kemunto: Which problems? Am I not part of you or are you not part of me? As long as we exist as a couple, our lives are intertwined. Somebody should tell you that. (*Brief silence*) Now tell me, why are you trampling on the vows so soon? Isn't it early my husband to pull strings as you've started? You wouldn't be patient until we seek medical attention?

Richati: Eight years. Eight years. Eight years isn't a short time my dear. I have told you again and again and I will tell you again today that I'm a descendant of the great Omache.

Kemunto: Go ahead and answer my question.

Richati: You can only break if you seek to answer every question in life. As a matter of fact, the girl you are chasing all over like a wolf will soon make me a man. I've been *omoisia* for too long.

Kemunto: (*Kemunto who appears unmoved*) Lucky you! How did you manage?

Richati: Hybrid seeds dropped on a fertile soil germinate.

Kemunto: Wow! Sterile seeds on a fertile soil would die.

Sterile seeds on a wasteland would die.

Hybrid seeds on a wasteland still would die.

(silence) Hybrid seeds dropped on a fertile soil germinate. *(She looks at him)*

So you are going for a holiday after hiding in all manner of excuses?

Richati: *Chanda chema huvikwa pete.*

Kemunto: *Na baya hufanyiwa nini? (He doesn't respond)*

In this valley of hopelessness, I'm more hopeful than ever.

My great grandmother, Kemunto, whom I'm named after blessed me. She told me that I would have many descendants: the barren do not have descendants.

It will shine upon me.

(She pauses) But how will it shine upon me when I spend all nights alone? *(Facing him.)* You have relocated to the kitchen. *Usiache mbachao kwa msala upitao.*

Richati: Talk of the fruits of relocation and I will be vindicated.

Kemunto: I hope you don't get indicted.

(The lights fade with the two facing one another)

ACT II

Scene II

(This scene takes place on white sand on a beach in Seychelles. It is evening and the sun is setting. Stellah is seated on Richati's lap. Both are wearing swimming costumes)

Richati: *(Laughing)* I have a weakness for nice things. This is the best not only in Seychelles but in the world. Look *(gestures)* this is the meeting point of the waves of romance: the headquarters of love... *(Stellah looks around in awe)*

Stellah: *(Moving her head.)* What a beautiful scenery. So this earth has such beautiful places?

Richati: Life has beauty. It is just that humans have sometimes attempted to customize it for accessibility by men of means. If it wasn't for Richati, you'd have sold your whole lineage to come here, *(He laughs as he tries to tickle her)* Ding...ding...ding! *(They both laugh and embrace before they regain their initial postures.)*

Stellah: It is a place that presents many dilemmas, you want to walk yet you do not wish to stand—you want to swim yet you do not wish to leave the warm and cold breeze above the waters—you want to explore more—yet you remain rooted to the beauty of your current scenery.

Richati: *(Excited)* The shores of Seychelles bake people in ovens of love.

One week will be enough for us to explore.

I want to celebrate my manhood.

I want to give my baby the best from the word go.

I want to give the mother of my child all that I have worked hard for in life.

(Looking at Stellah) These are the Seychelles shores of love.

Feed your eyes. Look—at the tropical palm trees that sway in rhythm with our love life—at the crystal clear water—at the gently trembling sea—at those strong and beautiful granite boulders—at the glorious ambience of the setting sun on this tropical island.

(Richati carries her as they move on the white sand. He places her down but holds her by the hip.)

The waves are gentle. This *(Fetching water by his palm)* is not just crystal clear water—it is an ocean of love. Come, let's immerse ourselves in it and renew ourselves. They say that this water heals skin rashes. Also, if you have been bewitched, this has a cleansing effect. We'll come here often. This is just a pre-visit. *(He pulls her into the water.)*

Stellah: Richati my love

The father of our child

How can I thank you?

Your willingness not to spare anything

For the sake of your child

And mother to your child baffles me.

(She pulls him close so that they stand looking at each other.)

You said I'm not yet mature enough to request for anything?

Richati: If you don't know of the existence of such places, what holiday destination would you choose?

I first want to expose you to the displays of life so that when you are asked to choose, you pick the best things that life can offer. So what do you wish to request for?

Stellah: *(She sings)* I'm dreaming of a little island...

Just big enough for two.....

(As she continues to speak. The song 'I am Dreaming of a Little Island' by Cynthia Schloss should play in the background. The two are seen moving from side to side with Richati's left hand coiled around Stella's waist and his right hand holding hers above their heads.)

Richati,

What a romantic man you are!

I will dedicate myself to taking care of you and raising this child for you.

I will dedicate myself to bearing you many children.

(Looking at him) What can I promise you that you cannot buy?

Richati: Perhaps you promised before I asked you to. You have delivered on your promise dear. You have made me a man. I'm happy! *(He shouts in happiness splashing more water then diving into the water.)* Needless to ask you if you can swim. I know you cannot swim.

Stellah: As a matter of fact, I can be the life saver here. I'm sure I know how to swim better than you. I may have grown where there were no swimming pools but River Omogonga provided the best swimming pool I can remember, especially during rainy seasons. *(She dives into the water and indeed it can be seen that she has mastered the art of swimming from how she does it. After some time, they swim to the shore.)*

Richati: Dear one, if you beat me in swimming, I bet you won't beat me in snorkeling. You won't say you did it at River Omogonga will you? *(They laugh holding their hands)*

Stellah: What is snorking?

Richati: The water will be angry with you. *(He adopts the accent of a European pronouncing the word slowly and emphatically.)* Say snorkeling!

Stellah: OK. OK... Snowhatever! What is it? *(She sits on the sand.)*

Richati: *(Holding her hand) Titi!* I know you're tired. Doing all these exercises while carrying my twins is no joke. From next week, they may start snorkeling in your womb. You will need someone to help you. *(She gets onto Richati's back who carries her across as the scene ends.)*

ACT II

Scene III

(This scene takes place in Nyanguru's room. In the room, there is a bed which is neatly spread. Nyanguru is kneeling on the floor with his elbows resting on the bed which he is using as a table in drawing. The room is well lit. He is facing away from the door.)

Nyanguru: Now that you have gone and left me, let me make myself busy by drawing.

(Kemunto is seen approaching slowly, she stands at the door unnoticed by Nyanguru who is busy drawing.)

Unto this leaf will I put all my artistry.

Whoever thinks I'm not an accomplished artist should look at this drawing when I take my pencil off the leaf.

I will caption it, "The Most Beautiful Woman the World has Never Appreciated."

Then, I will walk like a man tomorrow morning and give it to her.

(He picks his pencil and continues drawing, adding shades and colours. Kemunto tries to crane her neck but she cannot see anything.)

Yes! *(He nods excitedly)* This has come out perfect. Now this one needs a little shade...

(Lifting a pencil) The final touch now. I need to apply this colour of crayons to bring out her complexion. This pencil and crayons have lost themselves to this paper.

What a magnificent product they have born!

Out of loss are born new and better things.

(He is busy applying the colour. He looks at his work with admiration)

What an accomplished artist! *(Just as Kemunto is about to walk in, Nyanguru lifts the drawing before him so that his arms are stretched full length and his eyes are slightly elevated)*

Kemunto: *(In shock, she exclaims) Wow! (She attempts to get hold of the picture but accidentally switches off the light as she supports herself by one hand while stretching the other. Nyanguru screams so loudly that she misses the switch. However, she gets it in time to switch on the lights. Nyanguru is standing on the bed. His eyes are popping out, mouth agape, stiff scared.)*

Let me have a look at it. *(She stretches her hand in anticipation for the picture.)* Why have you never said that you are such an accomplished artist?

Nyanguru: *(He gets down from bed stretching his bare hands).* It was nothing really. I wanted to use these papers *(Fetching some drawing papers from his bed)* to try some drawing. I haven't started yet. I wish to put this compound into a drawing. *(He laughs sheepishly)*

Kemunto: Nyanguru, you are never free with your conscience. *(She searches for the drawing by her eyes but she cannot see it. She rummages among the papers on the bed for the picture. She finds and lifts it, keenly studying it. She registers a grin on her face.)* You are multifaceted. People never understand you. *(Stretching her hand)* Come!

Nyanguru: No madam. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. *(Goes down on his knees)*

Kemunto: *(This is what went through her mind though she did not speak)*

He carries everything into what he believes in

Though a few times he betrays his conscience.

(Looking at the drawing.)

What a unique way to call somebody's heart,

Without a single word coming forth from your mouth!

How sweet the words sound!

Knowing that we can offend others

And apologize we should.

Yet how wrong the context!

Would he be a Joseph and me Potiphar's wife?

Or would this be the panacea to the sea of trouble?

How hidden is the treasure of love!

We burn to offer it to people who pay little or no attention to it.

Would he judge me wrongly or would he be the water to irrigate this tree?

(She looks at Nyanguru who is still kneeling. She gets hold of his hand and pulls him up from his kneeling position. Nyanguru looks at her now haggard face shedding tears. The two embrace. Nyanguru is as much shocked as he is delighted. In closed eyes, these are his thoughts.)

Nyanguru: This is Madam, the boss

With a vast estate and servants

Yet she seems overwhelmed by difficult circumstances.

Let me give her this shoulder to lean on

And this cloth to absorb her tears.

If the master leaves his wife in tears, the master servant should wipe them.

These two who once seemed to epitomize love and true marriage

Are now like the poles

One in the Seychelles choking with happiness,

Another at home drowning in tears.

(Opens his eyes facing the audience. He then closes them.)

Two pairs

Two masters and two servants

Each pair lost in the path to love, in love's complex web.

New foundations of master-servant relations building.

How long will they survive?

Who will be the casualties?

(They slowly let go and walk across the stage in opposite direction as the scene shifts to Nyanguru and Stello's earlier encounter.)

Kemunto: *(She calls)* Stello... Stello... Stello..... Where may she have gone? She left us a few minutes with the knowledge that I would need our lunch! *(Laughter is heard from her room. Kemunto who is standing outside decides to peep.)*

Nyanguru: *(Stello is standing hands akimbo with Nyanguru before him. They both seem elated.)* Don't dare me Stello.

Stello: *(Speaks emphatically)* Address people by their titles, say Madam!

Nyanguru: *(Speaking amidst laughter)* Maaaadam! *(She smiles)* Some people worship titles. *(Aside)* You are the kind that fail our pupils.

Nyanguru: So in the teaching college they taught you how to cook for the rich?

Stello: Man must must live!

Nyanguru: OK, Maaaadam! (*Moving closer*) I would have made a career out of dancing.

Stellah: A demonstration works best where explanations fail. Go ahead and show how talented you are.

Nyanguru: Sure. However, you'll have to join me when I request.

Stellah: Make it impressive.

Nyanguru: (*He starts dancing to some music played over the phone. After some time, Stellah who seems impressed by Nyanguru's dancing prowess joins in. They hold hands and dance changing their dancing styles from time to time. All this time Kemunto is watching.*)

I'm a champion in this. You now have confirmed.

Stellah: A champion without a medal of course. I admit that you rule in dancing.

Nyanguru: No....no...no! You are wrong! (*Stellah, stares at him*) I do not just rule in dancing, I rule in many things except in growing my wallet. I have not yet mastered the art of fattening it.

Stellah: OK. Mr. Poverty.

Nyanguru: Hey.... Hey.... Did I just hear you mention poverty? Wait until you see the ocean of love I have built for.....

Stellah: (*She mimics him scornfully*) Ocean of love. Can that be an item on a menu list? Can that be eaten?

Nyanguru: It may not be eaten directly but it can facilitate eating.

Stellah: Let's not go there. You know you need to have something before you start planning our marriage. There is life beyond the event. Sorry. Did I talk of marriage? What do you have to pay as bride price? Lizards, squirrels, rabbits and hens? (*They laugh and hug.*)

Nyanguru: (*He acts like he is pushing a ring down her finger*)

Before God and humanity

With full acceptance of the responsibilities of manhood

I take you, Stellah, to be my wife

Stellah: Nyanguru, stop acting and actualize. *(She pulls a ring from her bra and holds it before*

Nyanguru. Kemunto leaves but as she has just negotiated a corner, Stellah sees her image in a mirror in the room.) Madam! (She draws the attention of Nyanguru. They disengage and move to a corner.) Oh! She is going to the kitchen. Thank God she wasn't coming here: you'd have been on your way home with a wife, without a hut.

(She smiles at Nyanguru and runs after Kemunto. The scene returns to the present. Kemunto and Nyanguru's hands are still held.)

Kemunto: Nyanguru, tell me, without attempting to cover the truth. Are the two of you getting married?

Nyanguru: *(He seems to be awakening from deep thought)* No Madam, I'm not marrying you... I'm not... sorry for the drawing... Ma...

Kemunto: Men do not fear women as much as you fear me. I'm your boss, yes, but I'm fundamentally human and you should treat me as such. Do I have some tusks on my head or is it a tail I have? *(She touches her head and looking at her back).* I have not asked you to marry me. I'm "married" though with a fair share of challenges. Are the two of you planning to get married?

Nyanguru: *(He repeats the question then pauses)* Are we planning to get married?

Kemunto: Are you answering me or asking me a question?

Nyanguru: It is a question that may as well be an answer.

Kemunto: What's that supposed to mean?

Nyanguru: I too don't know what it means. I have asked myself that question again and again.

Kemunto: (*Looking at him.*) Ehe!

Nyanguru: Marriage is not meant for those who don't share space and emotion: it works for those who have uniformity especially in emotion. I don't seem to have either.

Kemunto: What happened? What exactly do you mean?

Nyanguru: I neither have the capacity nor the will to search in the high skies, deep seas or the hot ovens of Seychelles for Stella's love nor the ability to change her heart's desires. Love is a complex and evolving game that baffles even social scientists. I neither have money nor do I have power: money and power allows you to negotiate for what you want in life. Without it, you choose what life offers, however distasteful it may be.

Kemunto: Is that the answer to that simple question?

Nyanguru: In simplicity lies complexity: it takes a complex mind to isolate complexity in a simple way. Madam, a man does not continue with his journey when his leg is amputated or is hurt. He needs a walking stick or crutches. I only know that I sold my heart to the wrong person. After all isn't it better for a cow not to be in-calf than it dying when the gourds are already cleaned? Though it hurts, Stellah is gone. She's gone with Richati. Who knows what life may offer them?

Kemunto: Though from your speech you sound like you have let go, I read twoness in you. Am I wrong?

Nyanguru: You may be right. I see myself as a farmer does. A farmer does not go to the field to sow if he doesn't enjoy to see the fields teeming with fruits. Those whose granaries are empty are erroneously judged as lazy but they may be the labour behind the full granaries.

Kemunto: Would you be the father to the child Stellah is carrying?

Nyanguru: Only the child's mother can authoritatively say who the father is. She has said it. Who I'm I to refute. However, before Richati troubled the well, we shared a common pillow and woke from the same door every day. Only that our positions would not allow us to openly show this.

Kemunto: Talk about this. *(She waves the drawing in the air)*

Nyanguru: So much has already been talked about it. What else do I need to say? The drawing has explained all I would have wanted to explain.

Kemunto: Does the message I read on this conform to your intended message?

Nyanguru: I'm not a sadist. I genuinely appreciate and admire the beauty of God's creation.

Approached from this perspective, our interpretations can never be different. However, I have learnt to keep what was meant to be and to let go rather than break what seems attracted elsewhere. I always work with good intentions although sometimes it does not bring the best results.

Kemunto: *(She holds the drawing before her.)* That's the irony of life. Where the sun smiles through glass panes, we respond with teary eyes. Where the moon and the stars radiate their brightness through the sky and panes, our teary eyes block us from seeing, where the best entertainment is drowned by our cries, where love is returned by laughter and pain is soothed by red hot iron.

Nyanguru: Love and laughter, pain and gain, brightness and dimness all contribute to the beauty of life: how would we know of gains without loss?

Kemunto: You amaze me with your approach to life. Though through our erroneous judgements we have sometimes seen you as simplistic, you seem to have developed a unique philosophy of life. It seems to be working for you.

Nyanguru: *(He laughs)* We must live knowing that the most wealthy are not necessarily the most hard working—our beginning points in life necessarily differ. We should work hard to keep our lanes while learning from and not envying those who are ahead of us—the best are not always the first.

(The scene ends with Kemunto smiling at Nyanguru.)

ACT III

Scene I

(This scene takes place outside the kitchen which is the place where Richati and Stellah have been spending the nights in recent time. A large group of people have gathered outside the hut. People can be seen getting in and out of the building. Speeches are sometimes drowned in ululations. They are singing and dancing)

Soloist: *Rora ee Sitera ominto*

Crowd: *Nigo are maritati*

Soloist: *Rora ee Richati ominto*

Crowd: *Nigo are maritati*

Soloist: *Rora ee Bochaberi*

Crowd: *Obeire omento*

Bochaberi: *Kende ngeiyio, kende Ngeiyio*

Crowd: *Kende ngeiyio, Keramosinye*

Bochaberi: *Kende ngeiyio, Richati one...*

Crowd: *Kende ngeiyio, Keramosinye*

(The song and dance slowly die as bochaberi begins to speak.)

Bochaberi: God, your ways are not man's

You have lifted the veil of shame

It's a baby boy... *(She ululates as she is joined by other women and for a moment the scene becomes full of ululations.)* It has been born with his eyes wide open as if it was telling me,

“Magokoro, I have come home at last.” I now have somebody to bury me. *(She speaks as if calling somebody)* Death, where are you? You may now come.

(The crowd breaks into laughter after which a person from the audience begins a chorus unto which the crowd responds chanting.)

Voice: May visitors know who the father is?

Voices: Why not? He who sires *omoisia* is a man indeed.

Crowd: *(Bochaberi calls Nyanguru to tell him to call Richati but instead Nyanguru turns up. The crowd happily sings to him some thinking he is the father before Bochaberi intervenes.)*

Hey be careful not to call *omoisia* a man. He is not the one. *(Looking at Nyanguru)* Call Richati!
(They continue singing as Richati appears, bouncing, ecstatic.)

Crowd: *Echae ya morero toe*

Echae ya morero toe

Echae ya morero toe

Echae ya morero toe

Echae ya morero toe

Ee ekiomogoko nomwana ogatoire.

Richati: *(Richati talks to the swarm of people gathered around him.)* A time of birth is not a time of gloom. It is not a time of meanness. A time of birth is a time of generosity. Don't ask for hot tea. As you now know Richati is a MAN and my son, Prince Williams Richati Daddy Omache *(They burst into laughter)* will not be happy to know that he was not properly welcomed. My second wife by bearing our dear son, Prince Williams Richati Daddy Omache has washed me clean of the dirt of *oboisia* in which I have wallowed for eight years ever since I got married. *(They*

happily clap) We will not just take hot tea, I want us to bath in food. You may call people from hills yonder and the valleys, call them from streets and paths, call them from motels and hotels, call them from highways and pathways. Call them. Call.. (*His speech is drowned by ululations form a number of people in the crowd.*)

Crowd: *Ariririririiii...! Ariririririi...!* A true man indeed.

Richati: In my house there has never been a shortage of food.

We've always had more than we need.

We are now complete with the presence of my heir—Prince Williams Sokoro.

I now have reason to work hard.

Would I have worked hard only for my wealth to be eaten by termites? (*The crowd shouts*)

Crowd: Nooo!

Richati: Will I make a mistake if I order for the slaughter of four bulls for us to eat and celebrate?

Crowd: Nooo!

Richati: *Omonto ning'o?* (Who is the real person?)

Crowd: *Omonto naye!* (You are the real man)

Richati: What do you tell those who have been casting doubt upon my manhood?

Crowd: May thunder strike them! (*The crowd sings and dances led by one of them.*)

Soloist: *Omosacha tware korigia*

Crowd: *Ee ndero twamonyora* (*Repeated twice*)

Soloist: *Omwana tware korigia*

Crowd: *Ee ndero twamonyora*

Ee ndero twamonyora

Ee ndero twamonyora

Richati: What a joyous day! Today...

(His speech is cut short by the commotion in the hut. A number of people rush in to see what is taking place. The rest stand still, scared. Bochaberi walks out from the hut.)

Bochaberi: *(She faces the sun and starts to speak.)* Engoro, in my lowest point, I have seen your hand upon my life. Will you heal me or push me further into misery? May the rising sun shine upon us.

Richati: *(Richati gets out of the hut and appeals to her mother.)* Mother... mother... Mother please do something. She will die. She has become weak.

Bochaberi: We have done all we could. *(Okenyuri who is the midwife appears)* Okenyuri!

Okenyuri: I need a person who can run. *(Richati rashes from the vicinity then appears with Nyanguru.*

Okenyuri holds Nyanguru's hand and walks some steps from the duo then gives instructions.) Son, I suppose you know my house

Nyanguru: Yes

Okenyuri: Pick some soil from a hill mole in the field down there and mix, mix it inside here. Then give this to my daughter and tell her to plus *rirongo*. Yeah, if it's sorcery *rirongo* can clear it. Understood?

Nyanguru: Yes

Okenyuri: Stop looking me. I have sended you. *(He rushes from the place with a water bottle). She turns*

to Bochaberi.) Tell your son to get ready. We may need to go to hospital. Tell him to be ready. I'll let you know when necessary.(She gets into the house and Bochaberi paces from the place, her eyes moving from place to place in search of Richati. Nyanguru appears.)

Bochaberi: *(She calls as he dashes into the hut.) Nyanguru! (Richati appears holding car keys but shaking.)* Son, you tremble too much. The world is a violent place with so many active volcanoes.

Richati: *(Attempts to get into the hut but meets them carrying Kemunto out. A woman is carrying the baby while a number of other women are supporting Stellan on a mattress.)* Shall...shall... eeh...shall *(Looks at Stellan)*

Kemunto: Richati, let me drive. You are not in the right mental state to do it.

Richati: No.. no... no.... I'll go. Then let me get you my car keys.

Okenyuri: *(She instructs)* Place her down and support her small by the head. *(Signaling to a woman holding the solution,)* Give her the remaining solution. Kemunto dress the baby. *(She carries the baby inside and goes for the keys. After a while Richati and Kemunto appear almost the same time though from different directions.)*

Richati: Kemunto, what happened to my car? It cannot be turned on. *(She does not respond. She instead stretches her arm so that Richati can take her car keys from her. He does not take them but instead he looks sternly at her.)* Are you deaf or devilish?

Kemunto: I could be both.

Okenyuri: Time of sickness is no time of spitting verbal venom. Is the car ready?

Kemunto: Yes Mum. Can we go?

Okenyuri: *(To others)* Let's go. *(They carry the patient.)*

Bochaberi: Where is the baby?

(All eyes turn to Kemunto. She turns her eyes to the hut where she left the baby for dressing and calls.)

Kemunto: Bring the baby... the baby. *(She turns.)* Let's go. Let's go. *(They start to move but suddenly stop when Bochaberi blurts out)*

Bochaberi: Bring the baby, you blood-thirsty leech! Do you want to suck blood from both the Stellah and my grandson? Should anything happen, you will not live to tell.

Kemunto: A witch and a righteous man are the same. The righteous may as well be the guilty.

(Bochaberi and Kemunto stop and continue quarrelling as the others move. When they get to the car, she throws the keys and starts to walk back as Bochaberi continues hurling insults.)

Bochaberi: I have warned him again and again but he does not listen to me

We now have lost two lives to this blood thirsty leech,

Kemunto: *(Interrupting)* Lost who? If you wish to see graves do not associate me with them.

Bochaberi: *(Continues to speak)*

The devil you are cannot bare to see a woman becoming a mother

Your malice can only be overtaken by yourself.

(She continues to wail attracting many people from the house and neighbourhood. All this time, Kemunto is looking at her.)

Kemunto: Why do you like associating me with evil? What have I done?

Bochaberi: *(She continues weeping and hurling insults.)* This blood thirsty leech has sucked two lives.

She cannot bear to see a woman becoming a mother when she is a barren land. *(Kemunto gets angry. She tries to walk away but the agitated crowd cannot allow her to go. Bochaberi is*

shouting at the top of her voice.) You have fed my son on poison. You have failed to give us a child. You have killed my daughter-in-law and my grandson...

Kemunto: You call the living dead and want the living dead. Mother, why do you spell doom upon the living?

Bochaberi: May thunder strike you! (*Pointing herself*) This womb would never carry somebody of your kind.

Kemunto: A womb is a witch: it brings forth both witches and thieves. I didn't apply for my birth. Now that I have been born, I won't wish to strangle myself because by the standards of others I'm a sub-human.

Bochaberi: Do you think that those who said that a productive womb is the cradle of womanhood were fools?

Kemunto: If mine is a deformity, then it would be wrong for me to be discriminated against as I belong to the group of the handicapped. In life, people lose or are born without legs, hands, eyes among others: the worst loss is that of conscience. I see faces frowning with anger, eyes burning with rage, arms shaking with bitterness, gnashing teeth with anger...

Bochaberi: Oh! Oh! Oh! How dare you open your mouth before your parents? What do you think you are doing?

Kemunto: Your voice no longer makes sense to my ears. The truth is immutable: it is neither democratic nor draconian. It always sets people free.

Bochaberi: What do you know about the truth that we have not known all these years?

(She laughs trying to hold her right ear and then she turns. She moves closer and holds both her ears which she pinches. Kemunto pushes them and hits others. As a result of this, she tries to force her way out of the crowd.)

Kemunto: Let me go... Let me go.... *(People are now pushing her from side to side)*

Bochaberi: *(She begins to sing a dirge to mourn the death of Stellah and the newborn. She lets go*

Kemunto who just like the rest gets shocked at the turn of events. People mourn for some time before voices are heard making enquiry on the same.)

My son, you are not yet a man. You are *omoisia*. If you had listened to your mother, son, you would not be in this mess. How will you free yourself from this yoke you have entangled yourself with? We are now mourning the death of a mother and a son. What shall we do to the wombless barren who suck life out of others. Where shall I hide my face?

(She turns to Kemunto who is also sobbing. Tears can be seen flowing down her cheeks)

Why have you decided to drown me in shame like this?

Why? Why? Why have you decided to kill the joy of seeing a newborn? If you wanted to have the water spilt, why would you also ensure the pot is broken?

Kemunto: How many times will I tell you that I have nothing to do with this? Who said they are dead?

Bochaberi: Here, in this homestead, will be dug three graves. The death of two will be mourned: the death of one will be celebrated.

Voice: Bochaberi, are you sure they are dead?

Bochaberi: They are dead.

Voice: Completely dead?

Bochaberi: Perfectly dead. No shred of life in them. This woman had sworn that I would know no peace.

Voices: Nooooo! (*The crowd charges at Kemunto as she tries to escape. She is surrounded by people who are shouting at her. She can be heard wailing. Jefferson and Thomas appear.*)

Thomas: Jefferson, they want to hit Mummy. Look! That man is beating Mummy!

Jefferson: Let's go and beat them. Let's beat them. I will carry these thorns!

Voices: *Ekiage, ekiage, burn her, burn her. Ekiage, ekiage. Lower that ekiage (They form a chorus from this word and a group of men lower a grass thatched roof of a granary over Kemunto who has been tied up.)*

Voice: Let it not be said that in the group of men and women, there were only women. You will dialogue with fire.

Voices: (*Her voice can still be heard. People are now shouting calling for a matchbox. Kiberiti. Leta kiberiti. Ekebiriti*)

Thomas: Mummy... Mummy... Mummy (*He begins to shove through the crowd to reach his mother. Jefferson is following pulling a thornbush.*)

Voices: Ouch! Ouch! (*The crowd opens the way from where Thomas and Jefferson are passing. Jefferson is crying as Thomas pulls the grass from the side of the roof and Kemunto's face can be seen.*)

Kemunto: What have I done? What have I done?

Bochaberi can be seen moving from place to place with a shuka tied around her stomach and her palms on her head.

Bochaberi: She'll not continue urinating here.

Kemunto: This is my home. I have built it. Here will I die but not without a fight.

Voices: She's a witch. Don't move nearer. She's a witch.

Kemunto: Witchcraft exists in your mind. You may be darker than I am.

Thomas & Jefferson: *(Hitting Bocharberi with thornbushes) Acha Mummy!*

Voices: Hey, nooo! *(Thomas and Jefferson are carried away.)*

Kemunto: Come, let me share something with you.

(She says looking at the man who has been very active in tying her and lowering the roof over her. He moves closer.)

What have I done? Whom have I wronged?

(The man searches for somebody who may have heard the questions to respond. He himself seems unsure of what the lady had done.) Come. Move nearer.

(Moves closer as the rest of the people stare. She spits on him as Richati suddenly appears)

Richati: What is happening?

Voice: *Pole...pole...*

Richati: Should a man be congratulated on being a man or condoled? *(Tries to break into the centre. He plainly looks at Kemunto in the granary.)* What have you done again Kemunto?

Kemunto: What have I ever done?

Richati: Is this your way of celebrating?

Kemunto: Nobody celebrates death. A silent womb is the root of my woes. How are your wife and child Mr. Total Man?

Richati: What is going on here?

Kemunto: What do you see?

Voices: Police... police...police.... *(The people scatter. The scene comes to an end.)*

ACT III

Scene II

This scene takes place in the kitchen. People are dancing to the music that is playing as Bochaberi interacts with Stelloh.

Bochaberi: I have waited for far too long to come for this visit.

I would not come

Rather than give me a grandson who would prompt my visit,

She has been struggling to shed her skin like a snake.

Stelloh: Ah Mum... look at him. *(Looking at the child.)* Quite handsome.

Bochaberi: Sure. Sure. He looks like his father. This is how he used to look at me. *(Tickles the baby)*

Hello!

Stelloh: Even the hair is his

Bochaberi: Look at the nose—*ekeboye*. Like father like son. Come. Come my grandchild.

(She stretches her arms and Stelloh hands over the baby to her. She looks at the baby and speaks as if addressing him.)

Grandson, you have lifted the veil of shame. How handsome you look! *(Stelloh just looks on and smiles.)*

Stelloh: Let me dance a bit. I have so much waited for this day.

Bochaberi: Dance my daughter. Dance and eat well. My grandson needs milk. He has already started licking his lips. *(Addressing the baby.)* Every time is meal time? Eh!

Stelloh: *(Laughs.)* He has a good appetite. He will grow to protect us as a family.

Bochabri: Hey! Grandson, grow to be a blessing to God and humankind. *(She tickles the baby)* Digi!

Digi! Digi! Digi!

(The baby laughs. Bochaberi frowns then appears to be in deep thought as if in search of something from her memory. She tries to recollect her encounter with Nyanguru.)

Voice: But I don't see anybody. Grandma who is after you? ...Sorry Mum.

Bochaberi: *(Looking at the ears)* These ear lobes! These eyes! OK.

Nyanguru: *(He appears with a bundle of things which he places before Bochaberi)* Here Mum. She bought these for the baby and asked me to deliver them.

Bochaberi: *(Keenly looks at Nyanguru then the baby.)* Who bought them?

Nyanguru: Richati's wife.

Bochaberi: Stellah?

Nyanguru: No! *(She looks at Nyanguru as if soliciting for an answer)* Jefferson's mother.

Bochaberi: You mean my son's wife who has a son called Jefferson? Who is that? Do I know her?

Nyanguru: Mum you don't know Kemunto?

Bochaberi: *(She laughs)* Did I hear you say mother?

Nyanguru: Yes. Jefferson's mother. *(She pushes the luggage away by her left leg)*

Bochaberi: Motherhood isn't something that can be bought or that falls from the sky like rain:

one has to carry here *(pointing her womb)* for nine months and experience labour pains.

Anything else is hypocrisy. Since the boys were returned, sense has entered her.

Nyanguru: OK, Mum. *(The baby starts to cry.)*

Bochaberi: Call Stellah.

Nyanguru: He knows me Mum, I can take care of him as we wait for her. *(She lifts the baby to*

Nyanguru.)

Nyanguru: Daddy.... Daddy.... Stop crying. You are now a fully grown boy. *(The baby stops crying.*

Stellah comes back and soon after Richati appears.)

Stellah: Big boy you have started sending distress signals?

Nyanguru: No. As you can see the boy is smiling. *(To the baby) Daddy...Daddy...Daddy. (The baby*

laughs)

Richati: Come my heir. Come. Your daddy desires to hold you in his arms. *(Stretches his arms to*

Nyanguru who places the baby on them.)

Richati: *(The baby starts to cry)* Ah! Baby stop crying.

Stellah: Have a look at this boy crying when his father is holding him. Bad boy.

Richati: He may be hungry and won't accept anybody

Nyanguru: OK. OK. Baby let's go out and play *(He holds the baby who stops crying.)*

Bochaberi: *(Aside)* Blood is thicker than water. Movement from one pair of arms to another moves the

baby from tears to laughter to tears or from tears to laughter. Wonders will never end.

(Lifting a baby shawl from the bundle) Here is a special gift for the baby.

Richati: Special gift indeed. This is what I was planning to buy for my son. *(Getting excited)* Did you

buy it Mum?

Bochaberi: What's special here? My eyes won't be covered by any blinkers. I know genuine appreciation

and mockery.

Richati: What mockery Mum? Thank you. Thank you. It is a special gift I swear. It is the best we have received...

Bochaberi: (*Mockingly*) Special gift. Compose songs of praise for her: lovely Kemunto. (*Both Stellah and Richati.*)

Stellah & Richati: Kemunto!

Bochaberi: (*Looking at Nyanguru.*) Tell them.

Nyanguru: She bought them for the baby and asked me to bring them here.

Richati: Let me have the baby. Get the visitors more drinks. (*Richati hands over the baby to Richati and again the baby starts to cry.*) OK. O.K Son, go to your mother.

Bochaberi: (*Turns and joins the others in singing and dancing.*) Let us sing and dance for the baby has brought us together. (*Ululations*)

voices: (*They sing*) *Ekiomogoko nomwana ogatoire*

Ekiomogoko nomwana ogatoire

Bochaberi: I have reason to come here. Visiting a home without children is like visiting a morgue. How would I have come? (*She dances*) Sprinkle some water. Sprinkle some water, this dust is browning and drowning us. Time to eat. Time to eat.

(Ululations are heard from the crowd as they sit for tea. Women walk in with thermos flasks.

The last to walk into the room is Kemunto)

Kemunto: We welcome you home our dear guests. Sorry I have come a bit late.

Bochaberi: What brings you here?

Kemunto: Where Mum?

Bochaberi: Where else would I be talking about except here?

Kemunto: When flowers bloom nobody tells bees that it is time for honey making. Should I not rejoice on my husband's wife being a mother?

Bochaberi: I think you have grown now. Age has cleared the rheum of childish innocence from your eyes: you can now see more clearly. Do you regret?

Kemunto: Regret what?

Bochaberi: Naive innocence never works nowadays!

Kemunto: Allow me a little peace, please.

Bochaberi: As you can see we have not come to disturb your peace in your palace in turmoil. A cold house is mirrored in a jumpy woman. She invites herself to places she is least wanted.

Kemunto: *(She ignores the comment)* Let us pray for the meal. *(They close their eyes)* Our f...

Bochaberi: Hey don't! Open your eyes! Let it not be said that I did not warn you. May I see your hand if you want to die. *(The visitors shockingly stare at her.)* Pray while our eyes are open.
(Laughter.)

Kemunto: Why do you hate me so much Mum? What will I ever do to earn your "forgiveness"?

Bochaberi: My God is alive. You have wasted my son's eight years on *amaebi*. You had prevented him from being a man but God never sleeps: the time has come. *(The women ululate then start to sing as Kemunto and a few other women watch.)*

Chorus: *Echae ya morero toe*

Echae ya morero toe

Echae ya morero toe

Soloist: *Kende ngeiyio kende ngeiyio*

Chorus: *kende ngeiyio keramosinye*

Soloist: *kende ngeiyio Sitera*

Chorus: *Kende ngeiyio keramosinye*

Soloist: *kende ngeiyio Richati...*

Chorus: *kende ngeiyio keramosinye.*

Bochaberi: (*Laughs at Kemunto mockingly*) Daughter, is it in the itchy late adolescent years or the flowering period of immorality when you tasted sweeter than honey? You threw away your child's house. Unlike hens that hutch outside their bodies, yours is a sealed case: no appeal. Withstand the tsunami of barrenness. Should you envy your co-wife for being a mother, you are free to carry a maize cob on your back. (*She laughs loudly*) Do you consider yourself a woman?

Kemunto: Peddlers of rumours and lies are more dangerous than vipers—they poison minds and destroy friendships—they misrepresent other people's character and make them appear evil—they create a mood of suspicion and anxiety where there should be none. Any little shred of truth in your hearsays would shake me. I'm a pillar of strength.

Bochaberi: If the word truth had anything to do with the number of times it is mentioned, you would have been the truth itself. Nature neither forgets nor forgives.

(Ululations are heard from outside that silence everybody then Okenyuri walks in.)

Okenyuri: Even men would not be as quiet as you are. How can this be called *ekerero*? *Aka*

Ekeiririato! (A number of women ululate but Kemunto and Bochaberi remain quiet.) Arooo!
arooo! Is it world silencing day? Kemunto you have a white heart. Why do you face your
mother like this?

Kemunto: Mother, the only way not to face her is by her facing my back. It is better to face my face
than the back. (*She bows*)

Okenyuri: Our son chose well. (*Turns to Bochaberi*) Bochaberi, a hen gathers and feeds her chicks. Why
do you want to scatter yours?

Bochaberi: I wish I had something to gather. She has zero grazed and fed my son like a cow. *Amaebi* ...

Okenyuri: Stop. Stop. Spare us... what did I hear... sorry ... but I think my ears are getting old.

Bochaberi: *Amaebi.* (*Okenyuri places her palms on his head, shocked.*) It was his breakfast, his
lunch, his supper. He almost lost his head. Were it not for my intervention through
Nyanabi, he would be mad. God is good.

Okenyuri: What exactly do you mean? *Inki?*

Bochaberi: *Amaebi!* Do you understand now? How else do you explain that my son has smelt her
armpits for eight years without a child. You see how she is looking at me?

Okenyuri: Bochaberi, that is not you speaking. *Ekorera* doesn't use such words.

Bochaberi: I'm now *ekorera*. How would I smile to that word when mine was a cold house?

Okenyuri: A cold house it may have been but you should know better than to blame her for anything.
She has a white heart.

Bochaberi: Don't judge an object by the size of its shadow.

Okenyuri: Bochaberi... Maybe she exposed her red thighs and he fell pray...

(The action moves to an earlier encounter on Stella's bleeding.)

Okenyuri: This is strange. How can she just bleed this much when she has so well brought life.

(Gesturing to Kemunto who is nervous) We may need to take her to hospital.

Kemunto: Mum please try. It would be better if I died than anything happening to her because I will be killed.

Okenyuri: *(To other women who are staring at her in shock while others have put their arms on their heads) Women. Can't you do anything to save a life? (They move but none touches Stellah)*

Kemunto: Mum, come. *(Gestures to Okenyuri as she walks away from the group of women.)*

Okenyuri: Call me if you have a solution.

Kemunto: I have come here because should anything happen, I may not live to explain my innocence.

Okenyuri: What do you want to tell me?

Kemunto: *Amasangi.... Amasangi... please do something before it cuts her back... (Okenyuri speaks as she hurries out)*

Okenyuri: Aha! How forgetful.... I must even be reminded of basic things.

(This is what Kemunto thinks about but does not speak.)

Kemunto: A woman carries the burden of her husband's immorality

She must always do something to cover his nudity.

A woman must always be drawn into a man's failures.

She's always a criminal whose wrongdoing is yet to happen.

How will I rescue myself should anything go wrong?

(She looks at Stellah who appears unconscious then runs out calling Okenyuri)

ACT III

Scene III

(Richati is knocking at the main family house. The lights turn on and Kemunto pulls open the door.)

Kemunto: *Karibu.*

Richati stands at the door as if in awe of the sight before him. From time to time Richati is seen scratching parts of his body.)

What is it Richati? Anything amusing? Have you seen lions on the walls?

Richati: Ah... Ah... nothing. Nothing...

Kemunto: Why do you appear like you are shocked?

Richati: No. Nothing.

Kemunto: This is your home but it is strange to have you here, especially at this time. Who has shown you the door to this house?

(He is busy looking at the new things in the living room. He does not respond.)

Kemunto: Richati!

Richati: Oh! Yes dear! This house has changed.

Kemunto: Richati, is it your memory that fails you or do you still hold some traces of love for this old “unproductive” woman? What has changed?

Richati: Everything. *(Looking at her)* Including you. You have added a lot of weight.

Kemunto: Have you just realized?

Richati: Yes... yes. The living room looks new. Quite a cozy place. *(He jumps up scratching his back)*

Ouch!

(He bends and scratches his leg and lifts the lower part of his trousers as if looking for something.)

Kemunto: *(Laughs loudly)* Richati, what dawn drama is this? Have you suddenly discovered a talent in acting?

(Removes his shirt and turns it inside out. He picks a red ant which he throws down. He looks there but cannot trace it in the carpet.)

Richati: This is a very expensive carpet. It looks nice.

Kemunto: What is it Richati?

Richati: Red ants. Red... *(Jumps scratching his thighs)*

Kemunto: The Pharaohs have come in to restore your sanity. Have you jumped ship again and left her being feasted on the red ants? Where is Stellah and the baby?

Richati: In Nyanguru's room. I need to change. Get me some clothes to change.

Kemunto: From where? You transferred your clothes to the kitchen.

Richati: No. I did not take all of them. I placed some in the wardrobe in this room.

(He stands and walks to the door to the room and turns it open.)

Kemunto: *(Nervously she stands quickly and calls.)* Here. Here Dear. Here

(She holds his hand pointing to another room. Richati's attention is turned to the framed pictures on the wall, his photo with Stellah and the baby, Nyanguru's, Kemunto's and others that he doesn't look at.)

Let me give you clothes.

Richati: Have you developed a new love for photos? Where is Nyanguru?

Kemunto: Where was he? Do you think he sleeps here?

Richati: What are you doing with that photo?

Kemunto: Whose photo? As you can see they are quite many?

Richati: Where did you send him? It's too early?

Kemunto: I have not sent anybody anywhere. *(Some sound is heard from the room)*

Richati: Something moving here! *(He presses the switch and paces inside. The tube flickers for long.)*

Ouch! Give me clothes to change!

Kemunto: Let's go.

(They both move through a corridor to inner rooms. After a few minutes, Kemunto appears. The lights are up in the room. Kemunto stands at the door and softly calls.) Nyanguru. Nyanguru...

(Opens the door further) Nyanguru

Nyanguru: *(Through the opening at the door, he can be seen coming out from under the bed)* Ee!

Kemunto: Be fast. Move to your room.

Nyanguru: Is he looking for me? I'll run away..... I have gone...

Kemunto: Go to your room. Red ants have woken him up. He is not looking for you. *(Nyanguru runs out, bare chested but wearing a pair of shorts. Kemunto walks to the inner rooms but soon appears with Richati who is smelling a vest he is wearing.)*

Richati: Smells sweat. *(Smells it again)* Is it because it has not been worn for long? *(Smells it again)* No. I found it on your bed. Why did you lock me in there?

Kemunto: I did not lock you there. It happened due to the wrong positioning of the lock. We need to get a *fundi* to have it repaired so that once you are inside you can find your way out.

Richati: But you have taken long yet you could not find me something to wear.

Kemunto: You transferred them to kitchen.

Richati: Didn't I tell you I placed some in this room? (*Moving to the room where Nyanguru came out from.*)

Kemunto: You can check? (*Whistles as he walks in. Kemunto is seated on the sofa. He comes out with a bundle of clothes and moves to the inner room. Kemunto is looking at the pictures.*)

A student of fine art indeed.

This artistry is unmatched.

When finally we are caught as it is evident,

Richati will devour us like vegetables.

But what gives him the right?

(Pauses)

What is the origin of these forces?

Master to house help

Houseboy to mistress

Master to maid's bed

Houseboy to mistress' bed

A child and a pregnancy: one father known, another in contention.

One family, a multitude of secrets....

Richati: (*Comes back holding Nyanguru's rubber shoes.*) Stelah, what is this?

Kemunto: What can you see Richati?

Richati: What are they doing under your bed?

Kemunto: It was raining outside. I could not place them in the living room... ah...ah... What is the purpose of all these questions?

Richati: *(Looking at Nyanguru's photo on the wall, this is what he thought but could not speak.)*

Is it possible that Nyanguru has dared to lick from my pot?

What have I done? What have I not done?

Have I craved to fulfill my desires or to live other people's expectations of me?

If the cobwebs have settled on the door and the mattress is as new as it was bought, where does he sleep?

Kemunto: What is it Richati?

Richati: *(Moving his eyes to the picture drawn by Nyanguru)* I was just admiring that artwork. At the exhaustion of his artistry, the artist must have applied love. I have never seen a piece so perfect.

Kemunto: His artwork is perfect.

Richati: Did you commission a company to have it done? An individual could not have achieved all these.

Kemunto: When we apply love to whatever we do, the results are always startling. Yes, he has achieved more than the photo elsewhere. *(Richati seems to be in deep thought)*

Richati: Kemunto, what are you hiding from me?

Kemunto: What else but falsehood. What I can't say truthfully I let you discover for yourself.

Richati: Kemu....

Kemunto: Mine has always been a cold house, a den of rats not worth human habitation. Your first time to set your eyes on this den should not bring me misery.

The husband is gone

The children are gone

The relatives are gone.

This is a den of rats that should not bother your peace.

Richati: Who I'm I to you?

Kemunto: Whom I'm I to you Richati? That is not a question that should be asked when

you think somebody is wronging you. It should live and pulse with blood within our veins.

Even in the dead of night, it should flicker to keep you alert lest you forget. The moment you rediscover who I am to you, all will be well: only that I'm afraid we may not make a clean sheet anymore because the stains—some of which are permanent—live with us. You may have been a prodigal son who needs to come back home.

Richati: *(Aside)* Let it not be said that I wasn't man enough. I will look for any little trace and take stern action.

(He stands and opens the room next to the living room. Looks as if looking for something. From the living room he can be seen moving and turning things here and there. He then moves into the inner rooms.)

Kemunto: A thought of infidelity rattles even the most docile man.

They are the same people who whimsically marry—even our house helps and expect us not to even cough. Sometimes the real impact of what people go through in life is understood when the roles are reversed. Revenge may be self-defeating but if it can open another's eyes to

restore humanity, it should be embraced. Here comes a man from the comfort of another woman's arms to fume and fret at the sight of another man's garments. They call it tradition. Should culture not be continually reviewed and refined for the benefit of humankind, gender notwithstanding? Should...

Richati: (*Appearing from the corridor*) Kemunto, is this not the belt I had given to Nyanguru?

Kemunto: What are you insinuating? What are you aiming at? Won't it help if you hit the nail on the head?

Richati: You will have to stop dodging and answer my questions.

Kemunto: Some questions contain answers; any response would just be a time waster.

Richati: Are you insane?

Kemunto: In case you have forgotten, let me remind you once again that that I'm fully in control of my life. Where we can sit and reasonably dialogue as grown-ups, count me in—where you sit and lecture me like a toddler, count me out. I'm neither a drum to be beaten nor a market where people come to shout.

Richati: (*Shouting*) What has come over you? Do you want to be inherited by a houseboy while I'm still alive?

Kemunto: Who is Nyanguru?

Richati: What else would he be except a houseboy? Such an ingrate!

Kemunto: We have been wrong for long. People reveal to us the colour that is attractive to our eyes: this may be deceptive. I swear, you don't know him... well... who is Stellah?

Richati: Will you also ask me what my name is? What are you driving at with such simple questions

opposed to common sense?

Kemunto: I have told you before that in simplicity lies complexity. In guilt lies a shred of innocence and in innocence lie shreds of guilt.

(Richati holds a piece of timber that is leaning on a wall and moves closer. Kemunto screams as she runs out drawing the attention of Stellah and Nyanguru. The four stand glancing at one another from time to time before Richati throws the piece of timber down.)

Richati: *(Facing Nyanguru)* You have bitten the finger that feeds you.

(Walks away as the scene moves to Stellah and Nyanguru's dawn encounter.)

Stellah: This may as well be marked as the seventh wonder of the world: a nocturnal man walking naked at night. Might you have gone to empty your balls?

Nyanguru: That may be a case of a monkey laughing at another monkey's nudity. When both of us were workers, you used to talk a common language. But since you found a "sponsor" you speak a different language.

Stellah: Don't abuse me... which language do you know?

Nyanguru: As you can confirm this mattress is new. You know the story behind the newness. It is new not because it was bought yesterday: it's a testimony of the good old times of smitten workers.

Stellah: You can't even explain yourself in a language that can be understood.

Nyanguru: Which explanation do you want? My language is as clear as it is artistic?

Stellah: Which language? The language of drinking from the Boss's well? How dare you!

Nyanguru: It was called exchange programme in the university. Since poverty drove me out, I have learnt to make peace with my new title—houseboy.

Stellah: Stop your ranting you idiot. You should have started feeding the cows.

Nyanguru: This “idiot” is not lazy

A woman who chooses an idiot for a father to her son is a no lesser idiot.

Stellah: (*Shouting*) Stop it....stop...

Nyanguru: (*Mimicking her*) Stop it ...stop it. I will not stop. If I stop, you may not know that I know what you know.

Stellah: Nyanguru, we are no longer co-workers

Nyanguru: Not quite. It’s the nature of our work that has changed. Originally, is was majorly physical work and minimally psychological. Yours is now majorly psychological and minimally physical: you are Richati’s psychiatrist—a master of deception.

Stellah: At least you know that we are not equal.

Nyanguru: *Kazi ni kazi.* Whether you are the president or a civilian or a waste collector you are all workers. What matters is not how much you get paid or how much they revere you or how much you show off or how much you like your title or how you take somebody’s husband or how you sell the identity of my son or...

Stellah: (*She interjects.*) What is wrong with you?

Nyanguru: That is a sick question. You should ask youthful questions such as: Who is Prince

Williams’ father? (*Stellah sits on the bed, obviously shocked but tries to compose herself.*)

Stellah: Do you wish to be the father?

Nyanguru: You don't wish to be what you are already. Maybe I should try to resuscitate your memory.

Before the British colonized Africa, Africans enjoyed full authority over their land: when they colonized us, there was a shift in allegiance—both willfully and by coercion. That created squatters of people in their own land. It also created overnight billionaires who were viewed as both important allies and traitors. Do you view me as an important ally or a traitor?

Stellah: Stupid!

Nyanguru: I'm indeed stupid. Very stupid. I should have known that your small head cannot accommodate high voltage intellectual engagements. Just to show you that I'm not what you take me for, I will intellectually ostracize you if that can crystal clearly manifest before your impaired vision that being a *shamba* boy isn't a holistic measure of my human value. It is as defective as it is infective and fallacious. *(Laughs)* How about that?

Stellah: How about what? I'm a trained P1 teacher. Working as a house help is a strategy.

Nyanguru: Strategist indeed. *(Laughs as he pulls his shirt from the cloth line over the bed where the baby is sleeping. He speaks as if addressing the baby.)*

Son, though our identity is strategized on, the distance between us, when I look at you has always been a mirror—I see myself in you.

Stellah: Nyanguru... *(He glances at her but continues to speak as she covers her face.)*

Nyanguru: I see myself in you. A blind beggar would see more clearly than your mother. I'm your father and you are Prince Williams Nyanguru, we had agreed to that name long before the smell of money came calling your mother.

Stellah: Let's talk. Let's talk

Nyanguru: If we must talk. Let it not be on who the father is. Let it be on who the impostor is. *(Speaks*

slowly and emphatically) I am the father to P.W.N. Yes or No?

Stellah: *(Speaks incoherently.)* You know...

Nyanguru: One word. One word my dear. One word yet so difficult to admit and pronounce. Yes or no?

(She begins to sob as the action returns to the present.)

(Richati is seen pulling a trunk in the direction where he left the others standing. Bochaberi walks in from the gate in the company of a young girl.)

Bochaberi: What's all this silence about?

Richati: *(Walks into their space to respond to the question. He repeats the word then proceeds)* Silence.

Silence is a deceptive monster. So many things happen in silence including assassinations.

Violence is better than silence because in it there is no silence. *(Facing Nyanguru)* If you haven't yet urinated, better do it because it will be the last now. I want to see your heels leaving after eight minutes. *(Throws the bag to him. He dodges the bag by moving backwards. Glances are exchanged among Bochaberi, Stellah and Kemunto.)*

Bochaberi: *(She looks scornfully at Kemunto then smiles at Stellah who is expressionless.)*

Let me carry my grandson. I have brought him *wimbi* flour so that he can take *uji* and grow to match his father's strength. *(The baby refuses her. She turns to Kemunto.)* If only this belly carried life in it!

Kemunto: Unlike before when you terrified me, today, you will be witness to your own lies and deceit.

Richati: Clear from my compound.

Nyanguru: Thank you for the bag but I have a request

Richati: In the bag, there is your fare—enough to take you to whatever destination you may desire. Go as

far as you came. I don't want to even remember that you once stepped here. Go...go...go!

Nyanguru: I'm sorry...

Richati: No apologies

Nyanguru: Thank you.....

Richati: No. (*Pointing at the gate*) Leave.... if you can wipe even your footsteps as you move..

Bochaberi: Stubborn as Pharaoh

Nyanguru: You sure don't want to chase me like a wolf though I deserve it, do you?

Richati: Pack...leave...go...disappear.

Nyanguru: (*Gets hold of the bag*) One request. (*They all stare at him.*) Thank you for the bag. May I use
the new Mercedes Benz to transport my family.

Richati: (*Laughs sarcastically*) Family! Yes you may. Gather all the puppies. They sure were your
project. Your family too. Put them in the Mercedes. I will offer you a driver.

Nyanguru: (*Touching Prince Williams who stretches to be carried by him.*) This is my blood.

Look. (*They follow the movement of his right hand which points at Kemunto.*) This isn't a
manifestation of poor diet—she is carrying my child too.

Stellah: (*Amidst tears*) Sorry...sorry...

Kemunto: When sorting is done on beans to cook, the “waste” is cast away. At the right
time, when the conditions are good, they germinate—they feed the family. *Ekebochi* is
especially good during the dry time of scarcity. Never has it ever been my intention to take
revenge or view another as lesser because of the deprivations of nature or providence by
chance: I have always wanted to describe myself to people and not people defining me to fit

their meanness. Read what is written on my womb and then evaluate all that has been said and done.

Bochaberi: I was wrong... I'm sorry.... *(Richati moves into the house)* Let's sit and talk my son and daughters. We don't need to broadcast this to the world. Let's bury the hatchet. *(She holds both Kemunto and Stella's hands and looks at Nyanguru.)* Son, let's go in and talk.
(The two stand still and look at one another. They then start moving slowly before their attention is drawn by Richati who is almost naked.)

Richati: *(He breaks into a very loud laughter that they almost run. They stand and watch in shock.)*
Hahaha...hahaaaaaaa My Mercedes Benz. Rrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr...
(Gestures like one who is driving. He then starts pushing a maize cob on the Veranda while producing a sound like that of a moving car.)

Kemunto: *(In tears.)* When the succulence of the love of heart is dried by stereotypically engrained hatred, the character of man shrivels. When the self outgrows the importance of humanity, man begins to hit another like a ball, on rugged ground oblivious of the crimson left of a call to conscience. *(Facing the audience.)* Do not show people scars before the story behind them: they are likely to judge you wrongly.

**** THE END ****

Glossary of Words

- Omoisia-*** The word refers to an uncircumcised boy. It is a pejorative term that is also used to abuse those who cannot sire.
- Abaisia -*** The plural of *Omoisia*
- Egesagane-*** It is an abusive term used to refer to those females who have not undergone the cut (usually young girls). It is also pejoratively used to abuse those who cannot prove their “womanhood” by bearing children.
- Ebisagane -*** The plural of *egesagane*.
- Oboisia-*** Boyish attributes.
- Ekerero-*** It is an overnight celebration in honour of a mother and the newborn soon after a baby is born. Usually, it is the woman’s female relatives who visit.
- Amaebi/ kababa-*** love potions. In the Abagusii community, it is widely believed that it is women who use it to entrap their husbands.
- Magokoro-*** Grandmother
- Egesaganeke-*** Abusive and demeaning term derived from *egesagane*
- Engoro-*** God of Abagusii
- Ekiage-*** Granary
- Ekeboye-*** A wooden spear that is spherical at the base and slightly curved to one side
- Ekeiririato-*** Ululation
- Rirongo-*** Dry paste of soil collected from a road junction. It is believed to have a healing effect against sorcery.
- Ekebochi-*** Plants that grow out of discarded beans during sorting before cooking. It is usually used as vegetables in time of scarcity.